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PLOMER

Mr. Plomer, a young South African, now resident in Tokyo, has brought together in a volcanic and beautiful book eight stories of modern Japan. The picture of oriental life drawn by Lafcadio Hearn is to him anathema. And he says so. His own interpretation of Japan is neither "romantic" nor "realistic." But the plots and characters he has chosen are at once those that reveal the social tension in the Orient, and with incisive art present images from contemporary Japanese life as clear and simple as the caveman's drawings in the painted courts of France.

"There is a Japanese saying that if a man wants to tell a secret he must open wide all the sliding doors and screens of his house, which has no locks, keyholes or walls with ears. The bright wind blows through from garden to street, from the mountains to the Pacific, and the secret gets well aired. The inhabitants of these *Paper Houses* have some such open secrets to tell."

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POET

PAPER HOUSES

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WILLIAM PLOMER

Author of *"I Speak of Africa"*

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TO

FUKUZAWA MORITO

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PREFATORY NOTES

EVERY outsider who sets foot in Japan at once, as if by some chemical reaction, produces a book on that country. As an apology for obeying the inevitable, I can only put forward an excuse which I believe holds good—that the peculiar circumstances of my life here enable me to say what I have to say in a way that nobody else could. But then I suppose they all say that.

★

There is a Japanese saying that if a man wants to tell a secret he must open wide all the sliding doors and screens of his house, which has no locks, key-holes or walls with ears. The bright wind blows through from garden to street, from the mountains to the Pacific, and the secret gets well aired. The inhabitants of these *Paper Houses* have some such open secrets to tell.

★

Certain polite Japanese have been good enough to express on several occasions the hope that the author might become "a second Lafcadio Hearn." He has hastened to assure them that such a name wouldn't suit or please him at all, for he would prefer, however great his faults, to be the first Plomer. And even if he were to wish to become the "second" anybody, that would plainly be impossible, for a man, unlike history, is, however humble or however great, never repeated. Next, he doesn't hesitate to assert,

after considerable reading, study and enquiry, that to be put on the step next below Lafcadio Hearn might conceivably be considered a doubtful honour, though the present author would of course be the last person to attempt to detract from the indisputable talent of one of the few Europeans who have really done something to make popularly known the long-hidden qualities of Japan.

★

It may not be irrelevant to make here a few remarks about this best-known European writer on the Far East. It is sometimes asserted that Hearn has a reputation disproportionate to his apparent worth, but as a kind of pioneer and an obvious enthusiast he must deserve the notice he has obtained. Still, I cannot perceive that a man from Europe wrapped in *kimono* ceases to be a European man. The more that the unfortunate Hearn tried to be a Japanese the more he proved himself a European, and because he called himself Koizumi, it wouldn't be illogical, though it might be unkind, to call him an ass. An anglomaniac Japanese, such as appears in the present volume in the piece called *Yoka Nikki,* is in this connection hardly more misguided.

"His sincere love for Japan," says Hearn's widow, "was not understood by [the] Japanese." His life was certainly miserable. Sir Edmund Gosse has remarked that "it was his misfortune, poor man! to be unable to retain either affection or respect, although he was worthy of both." Let the man and his life be pitied with a full heart, but the artist and his work should be judged with a clear head. Some think his West Indian work the finest he did. The best part of his Japanese work was an exquisite re-

telling of old stories, and this is of unique and lasting value.

But after making every possible allowance for the many good qualities of the writer and the man, it must appear that Hearn's mind's eye, like his body's, was a trifle myopic; and that though his heart was often in the right place the same cannot always be said for his head. He was sensitive enough, but he seems somehow to have lacked proper background and backbone. His interesting lectures were much appreciated by his students, but as a critic he has committed himself to statements of deplorable imbecility, as when he fails to find "the highest art" in painting, music and sculpture.[1] Considered simply as a writer on Japan, he seems to have omitted to notice sufficiently the help given to him by Japanese students in providing much of the material for his books, and to have allowed it to be thought (as it is still) that he himself was a scholar of the Japanese language, which he was not. As his friend Chamberlain has remarked,[2] "in righting the Japanese, he seems to us continually to wrong his own race." It was very nice of Hearn to speak so well of Japan, but perhaps not, in the long run, particularly helpful. Then, having no sense of humour (as his friend Gould has pointed out,[3] also describing him as not a creative writer, but an echo), he didn't face himself, and so couldn't face facts outside himself.

The Japanese are a fine race but they will not really be benefited by indiscriminate japanegyrics. They have already been sebastianed by the pens of far too many ebullient trippers. The Japanese point

[1] *Interpretations of Literature.*
[2] *Things Japanese.*
[3] *Concerning Lafcadio Hearn.*

of view is of course at present utterly different from the European, and it would be rash to say that either is "right," but it is interesting to observe how each might contribute to the making of a whole man.

Hearn's strength was not enough to bear the white man's burden, a job that requires a stiff upper lip rather than an escape into an insecure and degenerate-buddhistic fool's paradise of scented shadows, or a surrender to the illusory pleasures of lotos-eating.

*

This little book makes no claims to being either "romantic" or "realistic." It belongs neither to the raw-meat school nor to the literature of escape. The writer wishes only to be fair. It doesn't of course attempt to offer a "complete" or "bird's-eye" view of Japan—scores of common and important types it doesn't even touch on; geisha and Nikko and cherry blossoms and the Yoshiwara don't get much of a look in; no justice is done here to that divine drink called *saké;* nor to polite scandal among the missionaries at Warnizawa—and the phases with which the book deals may be found less sweet than significant, for it is no more than a search for an honest approach to a very few aspects of the Japanese character, in which are involved so many complications and contradictions; an extraordinary cerebral agility mingles with a fatal apathy of spirit, a puritanic strain with a dionysiac; human faults abound; but honesty, gentleness, truth, culture and style, courage, loyalty, ambition and even—I dare to hope —originality survive and reappear, everywhere and always, through all the unallayable turmoil, until achievement flowers from setbacks.

It is wrong, I repeat, to say that the Japanese are better or worse than we, for there is a kind of natural balance between East and West—what we lose on the swings, they often make up on the roundabouts, and *vice versa.* Humanly speaking, we are all weak enough; socially, they are backward, partly owing to their absurd insularity; politically, they are corrupt but energetic; artistically, they had already done all that art can ever do when the miraculous Nara sculptures were set up in the eighth century; they have scarcely produced a world-philosopher; and if anybody asks what Japan has given to the world, one can perhaps only answer: "A great surprise—and, thanks to Mr. Waley, the *Tale of Genji.*" [1]

I admit that I am an admirer of the Japanese, for I can respect and love individuals. But I disbelieve in their enslavement of women, and I detest their tendency to nationalistic paranoia and their particular politico-religious superstitions, which I believe to be more insidious and locally almighty than those of nearly all other countries, Russia and Italy included, and which, if persisted in, will have terrible results. Some predict a revolution; some hope for one.

★

Suicide is prevalent in Japan, especially among the young mature. And in the civil service it is still, in certain circumstances, considered meritorious to cut out one's stomach to spite one's past, or somebody else's. The Japanese are apt to call themselves a melancholy race. They are more. They are even inclined to be morbid. And this is no matter of opinion,

[1] It has been commonly asserted that the Japanese have no literature to speak of. People who say so have no intelligence to speak of.

for with the Japanese mind the transitoriness, if not the futility, of life is an obsession. The folk-songs, the literature, the everyday thought of this country are saturated with tears: a comedian in a music hall sings of death, and gets an encore; the china shop and the toy shop sell fascimile skulls decorated with life-like worms; at the transformation scene in a circus the ballet girls change into skeletons; in a café frequented by the intelligentsia there is a dead silence broken only by a drunkard's hiccups, by sobbing *samisen* music belched out of a loud-speaker, and by a subdued conversation about poisons—there in the corner sits Don Juan, in American clothes and pomaded hair, with his painted lady, both, at the zenith of their passion, looking blank despair! The peasant afield and the student at his book consciously await alike the inevitable hour.

There are other sides to the picture. Laughing and innocent children play in the street. What will they grow up to? There are contented families, basking in domestic peace. But consider the implications of the family system. You may see Darby and Joan leading a band of healthy, smiling pilgrims. Is the pilgrimage, so picturesque to the tourist, to be approved by the observer? These merry village festivals are based on superstition, and help to perpetuate a rooted mental hypnotism.

★

The Japanese are no more gloomy by nature than any other people, having in them a good streak of sound cheerfulness. In such a marvellously beautiful climate and country there seems little excuse for depression. The slightest inquiry into past and present will show that their own machine of a system has for

ages controlled its originators. And now the nation, although under extraordinary stimuli, is in fetters almost as rigid as ever. This is not the place to elaborate on them, but it is worth nothing that politically the Japanese have been and still are subject to that sanctification of the mass which prevents freedom of thought, speech and action, the individual's liberty and right-to-judge; while religiously they have undergone Buddhism, that wonderful human conception whose faults have been quite as pernicious as those of historical Christianity. The latter has led to aggression, Buddhism to resignation. There is plenty of good on both sides, but Christianity usually leaves even its crudest rebels with a religion, while Buddhism's most devoted adherents are apt to have none: they have instead, it is true, the deepest sense of pure poetry:

In the darkest of nights,
As I hear a raven that doesn't caw,
I yearn for him
Who was my parent before ever I was born.

That the Japanese are the victims of their own tyrannies and repressions, that they have by their own conventions and education been half kicked into apathy, nobody can disprove.[1] Nor does an intelligent Japanese usually deny that we Europeans understand better how to be happy. I believe that people ought to be happy, sometimes I almost believe that they can be happy.

Here some definition of the word "happy" is

[1] A Japanese professor said to me, "We are like ants crossing a stream. Many get drowned. Many more get across, but often at the price of nervous exhaustion." Numbers, movements and mentality make the image far from inept.

called for, and I will come at it on an interesting circular argument. Mr. D. H. Lawrence lately wrote, "When one reads Mr. Galsworthy's books, it seems as if there were not on earth one single human individual." The Forsytes, he says, seem to be not full human individuals, but social beings—"unaware even of the thing most precious to any human being, that core of manhood or womanhood, naïve, innocent, at-oneness with the living universe-continuum, which alone makes a man individual and, as an individual, essentially happy, even if he be driven mad like Lear. Lear was *essentially* happy, even in his greatest misery." This characteristic utterance contains a profound and accurate idea of happiness. It is not much different in essence to some words of a very different person, Mr. Wells: " . . . not even the cruelty of nature now defeats or can defeat my faith, however much it perplexes my mind."

The fact of the matter seems to be that happiness is faith, and faith is religion. But how does all this bear on the Japanese? Mr. Galsworthy, recorder of the "social being," has been a great success in Germany. The Japanese have always admired the Germans, on whom their constitution, army and medical science have largely been modelled, together with that ubiquitous love of by-laws that almost amounts to Prussianism. The Japanese have often been compared to the Germans, whom they are considered to resemble more than any other nation. Germany having been somewhat in shadow lately, the Japanese admiration has automatically transferred itself to the national machines of Marx and Mussolini.[1] Japan, in fact, is a paradise of the mass

[1] The tyrant and the mob, as Schopenhauer put it, are natural allies.

man, the social being, the joyless dupe—so we are back to the starting-point again.

★

I naturally don't regard suicide as a crime, but as a misfortune which ought to be avoidable. It is the system of "thought" and government, the lack of faith and freedom, compelling harmless people to suicide, which is, to say the least, an anachronism. Bringing people into a world from which they will long to escape seems less moral than birth control. There are people in Europe who destroy themselves, but they usually have a pretty good reason: whereas a Japanese lady recently left this world because her husband's pet canary got out of its cage. I am aware that we have other beams in our own eye.

At all events, the "westernisation" (satirical word!) of the surface of Japan, undertaken for self-preservation, shows a tremendous vitality, in which there is plenty of hope. The freshness of the young Japanese is charming and exhilarating: the human head everlastingly raises itself against the bludgeons in the human hand. Exuberance and vigour, even when misdirected, nearly dignify slaves. One needn't set up for a humanitarian to find sometimes a serf or a slut more interesting than a bigwig, and illumination doesn't lie always in averages.

The world divides or wavers between the heart of the indivdual and the organisation of the mass. If it is impossible to combine, or compromise between, the two, then I am for the man against the mob. In every individual one must recognise the meaning of life. We must all suffer and die, but whatever is on the other side of death, let us try and live without

dragooning the helpless; let us live, if only to show that we can, without complaining, sometimes endure our own troubles, but not those of other people.

In spite of all these moralisings, it is not the purpose of this book to preach. I hold no briefs. I have no axe to grind. In these paper houses I have wished to crystallise a tear or two; to fill a few fragile balloons with human breath, warm and animal; to keep a little longer some fading bloodstain by covering it with a piece of glass.

*

Two stray comments on my work I think it worth while to answer here. One is that I mix art with "propaganda." I suppose this is an accusation, but I have yet to learn that the results of dissatisfaction with human misery may be any the less noble than aesthetic pleasures. Of course they are not the same, yet Mr. Saintsbury has spoken of "that great secondary (if secondary) office of all Art—to redress the apparent injustice, and console for the apparent unkindness, of Nature." Propaganda? I admit that the whole question is a difficult one. Mr. Wells, for example, seems to have been wrestling with, or surrendering to it, for the last thirty years. He is a hardy perennial.

If a writer feels strongly a real tuth, and shows its workings in the lives of his characters, then I believe his intention is the intention of an artist. It is hard to believe that a European of honesty and intelligence could approve of the *system* in Japan, but he would be ungracious to find fault with the *people,* whom he would have no right to hate, for they are absolutely lovable. Yet it is they who tolerate and obey the system, whether they or circumstances, or

both, have made it; and it is they alone who can improve it; so it wouldn't be illogical to hold them partly responsible for it. With their system their whole psychology is of course involved, and it is impossible to touch one without the other, even if we are only to exhibit these people as the innocent victims, agents and instruments of their own juggernaut. Propaganda. I refuse to return to the era of *Madame Chrysanthème* and *japon-niaiserie.*

If my writing ever comes alive, I don't care what you call it. All theories are grey, and only the green tree of life is golden. If that should be thought a vague answer, then I would say that all art, even the least adulterated, even a Chinese painting of six persimmons, is the passionate expression of some kind of human conflict: seizing the beauty that goes, we grapple with that which endures. But the extensive literature of "escape" from life is a kind of propaganda against life. It's so easy to be on the side of the angels; one ought instead to play for one's own side, the human one. After all, if anybody is bold enough to disentangle "art" from "propaganda," or to draw a line between them, he might more worthily begin with great ancients than mere moderns.

Secondly, I have been said to possess "the inferiority complex of the romantic white." I admit that I am white, but not that I am pre-eminently romantic. The fact that in writing about Africa I have represented the blacks *in certain aspects* more favourably than the whites was the outcome of having spent years there in touch with both races: which leads me to wonder if my critic has ever been far or long out of Europe, even in spirit? Or if he has ever heard of the superiority complex of the pedantic

white? I don't want to recriminate, for he may have spoken a modicum of truth, and where he was mistaken he is easily forgiven. But let him remove from literature all products of every variety of inferiority complex, and see what remains.

Apart from literature, a movement unprecedented in history—this development of modern Japan—is the direct result of a peculiarly violent inferiority complex.[1] But there is danger in catchwords. "Inferiority complex" is often used almost as a term of abuse, but it might easily be argued that the whole vast effort of human betterment—from art to "uplift," from reviewing fiction to the sweeping of chimneys—comes from our conviction that we aren't as good as we ought to be. As for me, if I really have ideas which are impossible or childish, I hope to get rid of them, I ask nothing better.

★

I hope I have at least indicated that frequent revisions of opinion are healthy, and that I have hinted at the complexity of Japan for an observant and enquiring mind. With regard to actual method, it is my aim to present each piece, however slight, as an organic whole which shall combine something of the precision of a "case history" with the restrained freedom, the angel-in-a-cage, of imaginative writing. It will be seen that I have kept the brake on a too lib-

[1] I quote as a pretty instance the following story from one of the more recent books about Japan, *Yuki San,* by Ellen Forest. "All the Japanese seemed from the moment that they came on board to have one great fear, the fear that the Europeans would treat them as inferiors. Their desire for equality had degenerated into a persecution complex. Everywhere they fancied insulting glances and allusions to their inferiority. When anyone asked them whether rickshaws were not awkward for the traffic, they grew white with rage and protested haughtily that there are no more rickshaws."

eral use of Japanese words: for example, I refer to *shoji* as "sliding doors," and I omit honorifics, which are meaningless to an English reader. This is partly because I don't want to pose as a japanologist, and partly because I have always found it disagreeable to see "local colour" laid on with a spade. When, it is, one often can't see the ground for the earth that is heaped upon it.

W. P.

Tokyo, 1928.

PART I

NAKAMURA

NAKAMURA

It is a cloudy January morning in the small town of Ito on the eastern shore of the peninsula of Izu. A man in some kind of uniform is sitting in a small room and warming his hands. The side of the room is open, so that he can get a view of the quiet narrow street; a plum tree full of small white blossoms; a cottage where trays of flat-looking fish are put out to dry; the inn on the left where many visitors come in the summer; then at the end the high stern of a boat which is only half built, the wood showing light as if the bark had only been freshly stripped off; the grey beach; the calm sea also grey; a black steamer at anchor some way out; and in the far distance sunlit mountains. It is a grey, chilly morning without wind. Just outside, a fat mottled bitch is being teased by her two overgrown puppies, but there are no passers-by, and the only sounds are those of the planes and saws of the boatbuilders, and the wheezy, aimless notes of a harmonium two streets away.

The man in uniform stretches out his arm for a cigarette, which he lights meditatively in the firebox before him. Though he is a young man, his face is thoughtful and shows some marks of adult feeling; it is at the same time cheerful and hopeful. There is a mingled fragrance of tobacco smoke, the scent of plum blossoms and the not unpleasant savour of the drying fish. He looks up again, gazing vaguely along the grey street, until he is suddenly aware of

a movement. On the upper story of the inn some paper screens are suddenly pushed back, and the head and shoulders of a man appear, who leans his arms on the low balcony railing and looks out over the roofs. A gross enormous fellow with strong chubby arms, a childish face, double chin and bull neck. He catches sight of the dogs in the street below, an expression of pleasure animates his features which are almost too fat to allow of a smile, and he turns as if to call somebody out from the room behind him. As he turns, a loop of hair can be seen at the back of his head: he is a professional wrestler. In response, a woman appears at his side, and she too looks down gaily at the dogs. The watcher, the man in the uniform of a chauffeur, whose name happens to be Nakamura, is rather amused at the scene. It is rather charming, rather whimsical to watch those two throwing biscuits down to the dogs. The girl looks like a geisha. She reminds Nakamura of a girl who is nearly always in his thoughts, and who sometimes used to be in his arms, until—Reminds? He leans very slightly forward and looks carefully. It is the girl.

Nakamura sits back a little and shuts his eyes, but only for a moment, then he leans forward again and watches intently. It had come to this, then. He had never seen her so lively. She is so pleased to be owned by that simpering hulk of a man. Not having seen him, they both turn back into the room, she smiles over her shoulder, and the white screens close behind them.

Nakamura gets up, and he too closes the screens of his room, sits down, and jabs his finger through them once, twice, three times, to make an eyehole.

And then he watches desperately, with the face of a man who has been outrivalled by an ungainly simpleton; of a man whose heart has been in the power of one who is heartless; indeed with the terrible face of a good-natured man in whom jealousy has appeared for the first time, after twenty-six years of life. Nakamura doesn't move. After twenty minutes the wrestler and the girl suddenly appear in the street. They're coming this way: but they pause, and turn, for the old dog and the two young dogs, with wagging tails and lolling tongues, are fawning at their feet. The wrestler, looking down, seems to have four chins. The girl exaggerates her interest in the dogs so much that she bends down to pat them, and the old bitch jumps up and licks her face. She gives a little cry of surprise, and the sound of it reaches Nakamura's heart rather than his ears. He can even see the wet patch on her powdered face as the wrestler, amused, points to it with a squat forefinger. They are walking nearer now. How coyly she moves! Everything seems very slightly overdone, those mincing steps are smaller than usual, her toes in smooth white *tabi* are turned in a little more; and, while she smiles, her head, beautifully dressed, sways maddeningly—intimately on the slender girlish neck. She smiles continually, and her eyes sparkle—for one moment they seem to be turned towards the peephole—and then the pair are out of sight.

Nakamura looks at his watch. It's nearly time to go back to the garage. This morning he has to take a car over the mountains to Shuzenji. The question is, how can he be certain of not meeting them between here and the garage? He can go round, but it will

take longer. Then he must start at once. He takes up his cap.

At the garage he went through the usual routine, picked up a newspaper, smoked a cigarette, gossiped and joked with a bus driver who had just come back from Atami, went out, kicked a tyre, filled the radiator with warm water and began to put on his gloves.

"There'll be three passengers this morning," said a man, coming out of the office, "a farmer, and two people from the inn."

"From the inn? Which inn?"

"What?—well, here they are."

Nakamura looked up and saw the inn servant carrying a basket and a bundle tied up in a silk wrapper, and following him the girl and the wrestler. When she saw him she showed no surprise, but bowed and said good morning, whereupon the wrestler nudged her arm and asked her a question in an undertone, which she seemed to answer rather carelessly. The wrestler looked rather intently at Nakamura. They all got into the car, and the third passenger, the farmer, came hurrying up with a great clatter of his wooden clogs on the concrete floor. His manner, flushed, flustered and cheerful, seemed to suggest jollity derived from a bottle. For his lateness he apologised with unnecessary profusion, and immediately began making remarks to his fellow-passengers. The girl turned her head the other way, and on her face there was a look of hard, cruel, shallow, primitive sexual pride, for she could see in front of her the back of the rejected Nakamura, who was now going to drive her—as if he were servant, she thought.

They drove off up the hill. Two-thirds of the way between Ito and Shuzenji is a long steep climb,

and the road turns all the time in a succession of curves, corners and hairpin bends: these alone would make it dangerous, but also there is, nearly all the way, a bank, a slope or at times a cliff, on the left-hand side, the driver's side. Nakamura knew every yard.

About half-way up, the sun came out, that bright candescent sun of a Japanese winter, which nearly always has in it, in spite of its warmth, something of melancholy. And now, also, up here rather a cold wind was blowing. The girl could be heard to make some remark about the continual swaying and turning round the corners, and she giggled. The farmer had probably gone to sleep.

Nakamura was so used to the road that he seldom gave a thought to the ravines on his left, but now, having by chance on a sharp curve to pull up suddenly for a passing cart with a minimum of space to do it in, the turmoil of his feelings produced a thought, much as a storm generates a thunderbolt. It very naturally occurred to him how easy it would be to make an end of everything by a mere touch at any moment on the steering-wheel. The simple daring of this idea and the sudden sense of power that it gave him nearly took his breath away. It is safe to say that never in his life before could such a thought possibly have come to him, but in life things come so unexpectedly. Nakamura was now desperate enough to be collected and even calculating. In another twenty minutes they would be at the top of the pass, and it was much better to get it done on this side. With a perfectly steady hand he changed into a lower gear in order to go more slowly, in order to have time for his final thoughts.

His final thoughts. Let the three of them die together. It was better for him to smash it all up at once than to devote a lifetime of regrets, of misery, to the thought of her heartlessness, of *their* happiness. The car was not so new, it would not be such a tremendous loss to its owner, and perhaps it was insured; this would of course be considered an accident, for perhaps nobody would dream of the truth—when suddenly he thought of the farmer sitting there behind him. How could that innocent life be sacrificed? But if it were considered an accident? It wasn't going to be an accident. . . .

Nakamura glanced at the clock on the dashboard. In ten minutes the car would reach the top. The job must be done before then. Then? Now——

At this very moment the farmer, who had just been making inarticulate noises, belched loudly, and was extremely sick all over everything. The continual turning of the car had quite unsettled his morning *saké*.

"Stop, stop!"

Nakamua half glanced over his shoulder, and at once drew up carefully at the side of the road.

"What's the matter?" he said, but turning round he could soon see what was the matter. The poor farmer was now extremely pale, trembling and trying vainly to remedy the irretrievable. The girl turned away in utter disdain, but the wrestler, being a simple, good-hearted fellow, offered his assistance, and in a few minutes he and Nakamura had put things right. The seat was ready again.

"Get in," said the wrestler kindly. But the farmer refused to get in. He would rest at the side of

the road, he said, and another car would be up in an hour's time that could pick him up.

"No, no, that's no good, get in," the wrestler urged him. But he said he felt too queer to go on, he would sit down and rest in the sun. He bowed and smiled, a gold tooth glinting and his face looking excessively pale in the white winter midday sunlight. He bowed again several times.

To Nakamura, with his foot on the self-starter, it seemed like a decision of fate. It is impossible to give in words any hint of the emotional struggle that went on in him during the following minutes. At every moment he was on the point of giving just that swift necessary swerve. . . .

Once he caught a glimpse of the river, far down below there, gliding over stones—it was like an invitation. Once he glanced across at an opposite hillside where a few tall and feathery bamboos, full of sunlight, were waving among the dark and motionless pines—they were like a signal. These were the most violent moments of his whole life.

Suddenly he interpreted the decision of fate to remove the farmer in an opposite sense. Perhaps it meant that now nothing must be done? He had been free to do it. Now, having the power, he would not do it. His heart immediately began to beat more regularly, for the car had reached the top of the pass.

As it came over the summit, Nakamura was filled with that pure exultation that comes from having been forced to make a vital decision and from knowing that it is right. The blood sang with joy in his veins, and the car sped onwards, controlled, with faultless ease. The wrestler leaned back, his eyes half-closed, volup-

tuously enjoying the rush of fresh air, the sunlight, the triumph of possession—a happy man.

On a long curve in the road the steering-gear abruptly worked loose, a joint slipped out of its socket, Nakamura tried to turn in to the right, the wheels went to the left, and the car swooped over into the abyss, never even touching the grassy slope at the top, almost bouncing once in a scrubby growth of dwarf bamboos, holly, crimson-flowered camellias, and other young trees, and then hurtling heavily down, thudding and uttterly smashing among the rocks and pines below. So like the movements of a stone that falls echoing in a lonely gorge, or one that is thrown down by a child. . . . There was soon silence.

But somebody in Ito, who knew some earlier facts claimed to know later ones, and explained why Nakamura drove the car over the cliff. There was quite a sensation. All the newspapers in the country gave some space to a description of the crime. That Nakamura was guilty of one (some praised his courage) is the accepted belief, and indeed forms one of the most romantic modern legends of this part of the country.

It is said that a well-known writer has lately written a story on the same theme.

THE PORTRAIT OF AN EMPEROR

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ONE summer's day in the first quarter of the present century Yoshida Shojiro was appointed principal of a country school in the prefecture of F——. He was nearly forty, though he felt much younger, especially on that day. He regarded this appointment as an important step in his career. But still it was merely a step, for he was not without ambition. His father, a silk merchant, had left a flourishing business and three sons, two of whom had continued to trade with considerable success. Yoshida was often a little galled by the knowledge that his two brothers secretly despised him for his profession if not for his comparative poverty, and also by being aware that it was generally said of him that he ought to have been a business man. The fact is, he looked like and seemed to have the character of a business man, and knew it. He hoped to become in time a conspicuous official with a post in the Mombusho, or the director of a high school, or even an assistant professor in a university: once, but only once, in a dream, he saw himself actually as Minister of Education, with a telephone at his elbow: he unhooked the receiver and was just telling some secretary that, yes, if it could be fitted in, he would content to lay the foundation stone on Thursday week—when the alarm-clock woke him up. He earnestly believed that about an official of rank there is something more sacred, a

more radiant aura, than there is about even a millionaire. This belief kept him going. It pulled him over those rare occasional moments of ennui, of doubt, of sick headache which are apt to occur even in the best-regulated officials. And so, when he was telling somebody about some clever thing he had done, he could afford, as an official, to say jokingly, "You see, I am quite clever at business. I ought to have been a business man." And having said this he would laugh or titter nervously.

This laugh was quite characteristic out of school hours, and prevailed in all kinds of conversations, even serious ones. When he laughed his eyes almost closed, and behind the projecting teeth and shaking smile his quick calculating brain could do its work. For he certainly had a quick, shrewd brain. But it would be quite unfair to say he deliberately used his cheerfulness as a mask. It was simply a nervous laugh, which he naturally did nothing to suppress, because he knew that to succeed one must be popular, to be popular one must be polite, to be polite one must be cheerful. Of course on official occasions he preserved the becoming dignity. Also, he never smiled to his wife. She was a model Japanese wife, silent, hard-working, obedient, trusting and trustworthy, a good mother and housekeeper, with some natural and some acquired tact and good sense; in fact, a good, simple woman altogether, and quite pleasant looking.

Another peculiar occasion for the smile to fade was when anybody happened to say something which might possibly, conceivably, be interpreted in a sense at all adverse. For example, if one said, "Perhaps your little son is tired after his long walk?" or "Don't

you think it's rather cold weather for this time of year?" he would immediately appear as though he thought one were trying to "get at" him—almost as if the fatigue of the infant might be construed as a reproach to the virility of the parent, or as if a caprice of the weather involved some personal responsibility. The answer to such polite conventional fatuities would always be a shock and contradictory "No, no, no, not at all," in which there was no smile, but a quick touch of righteous indignation. In sum, one couldn't help feeling sorry for the nervous weakness of the man. The sight of a man unable to find strength in himself and trying to arm himself with authority is far too common to provoke either surprise or a sneer; the only justifiable emotion it can produce is an endless wonder at the endless travail of life.

Yoshida's management of the school is best hinted at by quoting his retort to a subordinate, who had said, "As a teacher, I thought it was right for me to——"

"You must always remember," Yoshida impressed on him, "that your first duty is not to be a good teacher, but a good official."

The recipient of this reproof was a meek and spectacled young man who sometimes wrote poemlets about autumn dew and the shadows of dragonflies' voices: he afterwards went away and of course never came to any good.

For the first year or two everything went smoothly enough. The principal was not popular, but he was not unpopular: he was accepted. His nickname was Mezamashi, which means alarm-clock. He made up for his strictness in school by resolute geniality out-

side it, and was more pleasing to his superiors than to those below him. Almost his only anxieties during those first years were the visits of inspectors and the occasional weakness of examination candidates, but these feelings were modified by a casual hint that intimated a possibility that he might after a year or two be recommended for promotion.

His family life was perfectly satisfactory. His wife was obedient and well-behaved, and without any obtrusiveness took a real interest in his career and in such details of the everyday routine as he chose to confide to her. She was proud of his ambition, and showed her pride by means of respectful sympathy. They had two dear little children, and everything in the garden was lovely.

Yoshida received a letter to say that on a certain day in about three months' time he might expect a special official messenger carrying a copy of that photograph of the Emperor which was just being issued to every school, college and university in the country, and advising him to prepare suitable ceremonies for its reception: the letter concluded by asking whether he had a proper place ready to house the photograph permanently.

From the moment when Yoshida read this letter a change began in him. Probably his wife was the first to notice it, though of course she said nothing to anybody and very little to herself. But she couldn't help wondering why he was getting so fussy about the reception of the Imperial photograph. Not that she failed to recognize its importance. In pure, unquestioning loyalty she was an example. One might have seen her, for instance, on public holidays, hanging out the national flag, a red spot on a white

ground, and the reverence of her fingers and the radiance of her face had something almost hypnotic about them. But her gentle, cow-like placidity simply could not understand fussiness. As she had been educated to put up with everything, she said nothing

The first thing Yoshida decided was to build a special little kiosk or shrine of reinforced *konkurito* to hold the precious gift. The tiny building should have no windows, and one double folding door to be opened only on occasions of national importance. But it must be very strong, rainproof, fireproof, burglarproof, foolproof and earthquakeproof. The school was in funds, so the work was at once sanctioned by authority. This was the only school in that part of the country which was to have the privilege of providing such exceptional security for the Imperial gift. Such photographs had usually been kept in a safe part of the main building.

There is no doubt that the authorities were favorably impressed, and there is no doubt that if Yoshida made the plan partly to impress them, he also did it from motives of genuine duty, loyalty and enthusiasm. He arranged a ceremony for the laying of the foundation according to Shinto rites and he himself was present in a frock-coat, striped trousers, a very high collar and black satin tie. As it was very hot, the month being June, he perspired freely, particularly after making his speech. But fortunately in the photographs which he had caused to be taken nothing like that was really obvious: in them his face seemed to shine with nothing but dutiful satisfaction. Naturally the whole school was present at this function.

While the building of the kiosk, or shrine, was

going on, the principal came every day, and usually twice daily, to watch. He not only watched, he made enquiries, assertions, suggestions and positive contradictions, so that the workmen, patient, cheerful. stolid country fellows, become piqued. They said nothing to him. Perhaps it was just as well he didn't know what they were saying to one another. One of them became so nettled that he ventured to oppose some trifling, but, as it seemed to him, an unpractical order of Yoshida's with a polite and reasonable refusal. Yoshida lost his head, said he regarded this as an act of open rebellion against authority, dismissed the workman and communicated his name to the police, suggesting that an eye ought to be kept on him, as he was quite likely to stop at nothing short of lese-majesty. The police filed his name and kept an eye on him. Yoshida gave an account of everything to his wife as usual, and she, as usual, hadn't the slightest doubt that he'd done perfectly right, and told him so.

Just before the concrete shrine was finished, an inspector arrived and officially inspected it. He congratulated the principal, who thereupon told him the whole history of the little structure, its virtues, and what it had cost and how long it had taken and how he himself had supervised its daily progress, and how, why and when the workman had been dismissed, etc. The inspector at first listened carefully and assented affably, but later he became a trifle bewildered by the principal's enthusiasm, and half mesmerised by the principal's vivacious unceasing laugh. Yoshida was confident that everything he had said to the inspector would be retold at headquarters. He repeated every word to his wife. She had no

doubt that he was perfectly right, and her eager attention never waned, but at the end she did venture to hazard that he oughtn't to worry so much, as he was looking quite thin since the end of the summer. He gave her such a look for her presumption that she never again dared to offer him a word of advice. After all, she told herself, he was always right, and there could be no doubt that his zeal would eventually be rewarded with promotion—it was time for her to wash the baby.

Some time elapsed between the completion of the building and the arrival of the photograph, and others besides his wife began to notice the principal's excessive pre-occupations. He was thirsty for congratulations, easily agitated about trifles, and the smallest school children had begun to feel nervous of him. It was found necessary to combine the two ceremonies of reception and installation, and this was a great disappointment to him.

When the great day came he got out of bed long before dawn to look at the sky. It was the first day since his marriage that he had got up before his wife. It turned out splendid autumn weather, and everything went off wonderfully well. Of course it was a whole holiday, there were flags and a band, local personages arrived in Ford cars, there were photographers, speeches, reporters—only a country affair, but very satisfying. All the teachers, children and spectators filed before the open shrine and bowed profoundly to the photograph dimly seen inside.

His wife shared his pride and pleasure. At midday, however, when the very bright hot sunshine made his black frock-coat look as grey as ashes, she had noticed that he was beginning to go bald. She

said nothing, having no doubt that he was doing the right thing in losing his hair. For he had turned forty. Now that all this concern about the photograph had been duly arranged, she hoped he would settle back again into the usual routine. But in this she was somewhat disappointed, for although in a way he had certainly become calmer, a fundamental change seemed to have come into him lately. She couldn't understand his fussiness and increasing nervousness, and would have liked him to see a doctor. She said nothing, but showed this much of her thoughts in a letter to her sister in Osaka—"He seems to worry about trifles," she wrote, "but perhaps will become calmer."

He had now formed the habit of going every morning, fussily, on his way to school, to inspect the little shrine. In the town people commented on his devotion to duty, though it is doubtful if anybody actually used the word "officious." This habit was bad enough, but worse was to come. Time passes vaguely and impalpably in these country places. A rumour arose that a lesser Prince of the Blood might visit the town on his way to manoeuvres, and in the uncertainty of its truth Yoshida brought himself down to something like nervous prostration, but the rumour was never confirmed and the prince never came. Spring again gave way to summer; summer to autumn; and Yoshida began to go twice daily to inspect the shrine.

"If anything went wrong," he told his wife, "I should never forgive myself."

She wanted to reply that nothing perhaps was likely to go wrong, but instead she murmured a soothing assent. He didn't play with the children now so

much as he used to. Perhaps he thought that as they were growing older he oughtn't to take too much notice of them, to spoil them. No doubt he was right. She heard indirectly that he was unpopular, but she put this down to jealousy, and as nothing came of it she didn't worry.

The winter was uneventful, except that Yoshida refused to take a proper holiday, returning abruptly from a hot-spring resort after only four days. The time for promotion, he said, was getting near, and as he had lately read in the newspapers of a terrible case in which a school photograph had been lost in a fire, he was doubly anxious that nothing should go wrong. His behaviour was by now well known in the countryside, and though some people though him to be the victim of a mania nobody said so, for one doesn't comment at all on anything even so remotely connected with the Imperial House. It is true that the Japanese sometimes understand the art of silent conversation, but it is also true that the swords of policemen have been known to transfix unspoken words. Yoshida, continued to do what he regarded as his duty, and nobody interfered with him. He was sometimes stared at.

One morning, late in February, he was awakened by the sound of water dripping from the eaves. He went to the window just after the sun had risen. The snow was melting rapidly and the thatched roofs of cottages smoked in the sun-thaw. After breakfast he went out cheerfully, wearing gum boots, a short black overcoat and a brown felt hat. His wife was delighted to hear him humming an old tune as he closed the gate behind him. The dazzling sunlight reflected from the thawing snow always put him in a good

mood, and he felt almost as light-hearted as a schoolboy. But when he came in sight of the playground he saw that at school something was wrong. His heart throbbed painfully, and he walked quicker, splashing through the slippery mud and slush, but as he came nearer a sick terror took hold of the pit of his stomach. A crowd of children and some peasants were standing there, staring and pointing at—what? *What?* Yoshida almost ran. The spectators made way for him, saluted him, but when he said in his agitation, "What's wrong? What's up?" they didn't answer. They pointed and stared. He then saw what was wrong. The door of the shrine was open, and the photograph had disappeared. A ray of the sun lit up the bare wall.

Everybody expected him to fall into a frenzy. But he was by no means the madman he was taken for. Not at all. He was a loyal and dutiful official, a servant of his Imperial lord and master. He behaved with exemplary calmness, quietly fastened the door of the shrine, ordered the lessons to continue as usual, summoned an emergency meeting of the teachers, told them what had happened, asked them to leave everything to him, telephoned for the police and explained what he had found, and then, on the stroke of the bell, entered his classroom as usual. He was invariably punctual, infallibly, since he had learned by chance that his nickname was Alarm-clock.

At lunch-time he telephoned to the police again, who had as yet no news, returned to his classroom, and finally went home as usual—except that this afternoon he omitted to go near the shrine, only glancing over the heads of the school children at the broken lock on the door. When he came in his wife

saw at once that something had upset him, but she said nothing, and began to clean the mud off his gum boots. He had gone straight to his study and was very silent, so she peeped in to ask if she should bring tea. He was writing a letter. He started at her voice, and drew a sheet of blotting-paper over his writing.

"No, not yet. In half an hour," he said.

She came back at the proper time with the tea, and he handed her the letter, already sealed up, and told her to take it at once to the post, which she did. She couldn't help noticing that it was addressed to a very exalted personage, and wondered why, half feeling all the time that something was wrong. She never suspected that it contained her husband's resignation from his position. In the street one or two people seemed to be staring at her curiously. At the post office a friend came up and exchanged several bows and after the usual compliments begged to offer her sincere condolences on the misfortune which had overtaken her respected husband. The poor woman was at once engulfed in a wave of nameless fear.

"What—what misfortune?" she asked.

The friend was utterly astonished and confused, and smiled politely.

"Is it possible that you don't know? Ah, how sorry I am that I should be the one to carry you such bad news. The Imperial photograph has been stolen from the school——"

"Is that so?"

"Some peasant took it, they say, whom your husband once dismissed. The rascally fellow wanted his revenge. Pray accept my condolences in this unspeakable affliction——"

The principal's wife had only one thought, to give

and to give with all her might streams of pure warm sympathy as a cow gives milk. She ran back home with the small steps of habit, propriety and the dignity of a schoolmaster's wife. She ran through the wet streets as fast as she could for the narrow kimono, but when she got home Yoshida was already dead. He had eaten rat-poison. His face and body were horribly distorted and his children were staring at the corpse.

Only two other suicides were reported in the newspaper as having occurred on the same day. A young private in the Imperial army had done away with himself, overwhelmed at having mislaid a pair of slippers issued to him by his regiment. And further, a clerk in the Imperial bureau of communications, suspected of the theft of two yen from a colleague, had seen fit to throw himself from the roof garden of a department store in the Ginza. But neither of these cases had such a large paragraph as Yoshida's.

The feelings of the widow were not what those of a European woman would be in circumstances at all parallel. She was deeply aware of the honourable behaviour of her late husband, a credit to his country, a starry flower in the annals of his family, a proud memory to his wife and children. Her love for him as a husband, her respect for him as a man of judgment, were rather strengthened than shaken. There was not the slightest doubt that he had, for the last time, done the right thing. As for her, she took the children and went to live with her sister in Osaka.

Her brother-in-law was no longer young, but he was very well off. His house was large and comfortable, and contained a miscellaneous collection of rich

and poor relations, stray guests and visitors, dependents and retainers. He was, in fact, a *narikin,* a profiteer of the boom of 1920, quite simple and kind-hearted in spite of his wealth, and often showed special kindness to his sister-in-law's children. Yoshida's widow settled down to a quiet, regular, respectable life. Her health was good, like that of her children, she had everything she wanted, and a real affection for her sister. Although life in Osaka was an interesting change from former years, she had plenty of time to think about the past: but she never became morose, and rather pleased everybody with her cheerful staidness.

Among the more permanent occupants of the house were several students, and though she saw little of them, she sometimes heard pieces of gossip about them and even felt a vague motherly interest in their activities. She couldn't help noticing one of them, a young man called Wada, a sort of cousin of the family. He had long hair, and a pale face which indicated a mixture of devilry and sadness that attracted her very much. She had never had more than a few words, but wished she could have a long talk with him. She would like to ask him about his career, his ambition, and so on. While she was in this state of mind she chanced one day to overhear part of a conversation between two older members of the household. One voice sounded like that of her brother-in-law. They were talking about young Wada.

"He takes no interest in his work at the university."

"So?"

"Refuses to compete in the examinations."

"What! Really?"

"Speaks disrespectfully, associates with bad companions and clearly intends to go to the dogs."

"Ah, I'm very sorry to hear it. Women, I suppose? Some geisha or other?"

(The listener's heart beat a very little faster.)

"No, no. I only wish it were. It's worse than that. Much worse. The fact is, I'll tell you, he calls himself a radical——"

(The listener didn't know exactly what a radical is, but she guessed instinctively that it is something bad.)

"——a radical. And he's actually on the black list of the police. It is more than a disappointment to me. It's a disgrace."

"But perhaps he'll grow out of it. These young men——"

"Well, I hope so, but I fear—— Do you know what he actually had the effrontery to say to me the other day? I told him he was disloyal to the Emperor. 'I have got nothing against the Emperor,' he said, 'but after all he's only a man.' 'If you ever say or think such a thing again,' I said, 'I'll disown you.' He didn't answer."

"Ha!"

"And I may have to disown him——"

At this point Yoshida's widow lost the thread of the talk. For one brief second the remark of Wada had seemed like a flash of truth, for one instant she was on the verge of doubting, and then she was absolutely flooded with a proper revulsion of feeling. The blood mounted to her cheeks. For the first time in her life she felt something like anger. To think that that boy, that student, that lazy long-haired good-

for-nothing, that *radical,* should mock at the Most Sacred Majesty for which her husband had died! To think that he should dare to *doubt!* She saw again the face of Yoshida on the floor of his room, the projecting teeth horribly exposed and slavered with yellowish foam, the familiar features fixed in the last grim purpose, the children watching. . . . All her pride, all her love, all her life, summoned up in her at this moment a magnificent renewal of the faith she had never lost.

She no longer wished even to think of Wada, and meeting him by chance the same evening she felt that she froze him with a smiling politeness that cut like a knife. Wada himself only thought her manners were rather stiff.

"I suppose," he remarked to somebody, "it is because she has lived nearly all her life in the country. A *petite bourgeoise.*"

Yoshida's widow's mind, which had never really wavered, was now for ever made up. As the years went by, she became formal and even prim, devoted to her children and to household affairs. But the words "only a man" haunted her till her dying day.

A SURPLUS WOMAN

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SOME years after the war a ship belonging to one of the poorer lines left London for Japan as it had left London for Japan many times before, and with the very same movements, swinging slowly out from the dock and heading seawards, with which it would leave the same place again and again. There were the usual noises, the usual smell of a ship, the noises on the bridge, and that first gliding, lapping rush of water going past which even to old sailors has in its familiarity always some freshness. Like an aeroplane leaving the ground, like finding oneself once again in the saddle, like going out, alone, to see once again an old friend, the ship is going out into the waste of waters.

The ship was shabby, the passengers were few, but nearly everybody on board felt at least that something was beginning: an exception was a young stoker, Bert Thompson, "always a reserved young chap."

"Used to be well spoken enough, but sulky enough now. I don't know what's up with him," was about all that anybody observed, knew or cared about him. He went about his work. That was all.

The passengers were few. Among them were Miss Welford and Mr. Pim, neither of whom had ever heard of each other or of any of the other people on board. The Reverend Leslie Pim was a nice

young man. His hair was yellowish, but without lustre, he had a fresh red face and clear eyes and an Angelican mouth. There was nothing about him really grotesque, except the fact that he was going to Japan as a missionary. He was very serious, and only last week between two strenuous sets of tennis he had spoken (with conviction, he felt, but not in the least with his pulpit manner—a padre, he always held, has no more right than anybody else to talk shop) of his vocation. Yes, he felt a Divine call to the Far East. Several people ("at Home," for the ship is already in the Bay of Biscay) were expecting him "to go a long way," for he possessed that rare combination, they said, of common sense and a sense of humour. They may even have said, quite justifiably, that there was no nonsense about him. Still under thirty, full of keenness for his call, with a strong sense of duty and a breezy seriousness, there was only one thing that troubled him. He couldn't open a prayer book without being reminded of it. The simplest Bible story, not Ruth or Magdelan or the Song of Solomon or anything like that, but even the most irrelevant story, would remind him of it. It sometimes almost interfered with his work. And most noteworthy of all, he couldn't look at a woman without automatically making rapid speculations about her. The fact is, he was not yet married.

He had bought specially a pair of rubber-soled shoes and he could be seen going enthusiastically up and down in them, morning and evening, at a great pace with his long legs on the rather cramped deck. Then there were deck quoits. He missed his tennis and would have often "given anything," as he remarked to the purser, for a game of billiards.

"I don't know how you manage to keep fit on board," he said.

Of course there was prayer; and then he was studying Japanese grammar, but the simplest sentence often made him feel giddy, as if there must be a great void awaiting him, in spite of his vocation, in the Orient. If only he had a helpmeet (or should one say helpmate?) he would be a more worthy vessel in the service of his Saviour. Well, he must watch and pray. A resolution that led to more watching than praying.

There was only one young woman on board of marriageable appearance, and after all it was only human of him to notice her. He decided to take the first chance of speaking to her. But, though nubile, she wasn't often to be seen. To begin with, she was sea-sick. When she did appear anywhere she never stayed long, and although the ship was so small she managed to keep a distance between herself and everyone else. "Keeps to herself, doesn't she?" commented the other women on board. Just this elusiveness caught at the heart-strings of Pim. Most of the girls he knew—his own sisters; the girls he played tennis with—were so lively, but this Miss Welford (what was her Christian name? he wondered) was so reserved, almost morose. Perhaps it was only shyness——? How thrilling it would be to uplift and instil confidence into that sprig or rather bud, of young womanhood—to awaken all her dormant idealism. He felt sure that He who watches our inmost thoughts had thus brought him and her together to fulfil some divine and inscrutable purpose of His. He had already found out that she was not getting off, thank goodness, until Yokohama.

At Divine Service in the little saloon with dirty red plush on the seats of the fumed-oak revolving chairs he had hoped she would have seen him in his clean surplice, standinig in relief against the Union Jack which served as a reredos. He had hoped to see her, but she wasn't there. Extraordinary as it may seem, he had no chance to speak to her before the ship reached Port Said.

"Beastly hot, isn't it?" he said. "I hope you're feeling better."

And then again:

"Well, I suppose this is where the East begins."

And then again, although he knew the answer:

"How far are you going?"

And then:

"Your first trip East, of course?"

She resented slightly his too frequent use of the word East, and she also disliked the tiny specks of perspiration on his nose and forehead. She looks awfully nice, he thought, I wish I knew her well enough to say so. She was quite nice to him. She wasn't at all pretty, but you couldn't help liking her face. Her dark hair (his was dull sandy yellow) and her air of sadness (he was so keen and cheery by nature) made an appeal to him. Her manner was just what he liked, cheerful, a little elusive, not at all sprightly, rather ordinary though not exactly commonplace—well, ladylike, in fact. But even after three or four conversations he felt that no progress was being made. Everything went quite smoothly, they seemed to have a lot in common, but somehow there was some barrier between them. He was keen and cheery enough, he told himself, so the barrier must be on her side. Perhaps that slightly sorrow-

ful appearance had something to do with it. Some bereavement, perhaps—even some disappointment? Some day soon he would venture, very tactfully, almost sacerdotally, a little judicious sympathy—even some enquiry?

"Oh, God," he prayed, "give me strength to comfort her."

That would make a beginning. Tears on his shoulder, and he would hold her to him. . . .

And what about Mary Welford? She was a not at all extraordinary young Englishwoman. When she had reached that point in life which has been so critical for so many thousands of ordinary young Englishwomen, I mean that time when their education is "complete," and when they and their parents are thinking of the values of careers and the prospects of finding husbands and are debating all sorts of plans, something happened. A letter came from a friend of hers who had been working as a governess in the family of a Japanese millionaire saying that she had just got engaged to a man in the Madagascan Legation, and hoping that she (Mary) would come out and take over the job. Mary Welford at once put the letter before her father, who was sympathetic.

"Take it," he said. "As you know, Mother and I have been very worried about you for a long time; in fact, ever since you left school. Perhaps if it hadn't been for the war everything would have been different. We should certainly have been richer. And Francis would have been alive."

Her only brother had been killed in Flanders. Her two younger sisters were still at school.

"The fact is, we're poor. It's all we can do to make sure the girls are properly educated. I try not

to complain, but sometimes I'm very sorry for your mother. Neither she nor I were brought up to this sort of life, but as things are we have to make the best of it. Of course there's nothing to keep you from staying here always if you want to, we love you very much, but we want you to have a happy life. You must remember that England is now full of surplus women. And what is a surplus woman? It's a woman who's not specially favoured by fortune, a woman who's not a genius, not even particularly talented, a woman who's not remarkably beautiful or rich or aristocratic or lucky. And of women of that kind there are hundreds and thousands. Not only that, but there are hundreds of thousands in excess of the number of men. That means that they have practically no chance of marrying, and there's nothing left for them except either loafing and moping or else doing some useful work. Now I believe that every woman ought to marry. I shouldn't like to feel responsible for having brought you into the world unless I thought there was a chance that some day you might be able yourself to live a normal and happy married life and to have dear children of your own. I still hope and believe that may be your future. But you must remember that you belong to a difficult generation. Everything's rather upset. I'm not a gloomy pessimist as a rule, but I know it's true. Mother and I have tried to do our best for you. You've had a fair education, and even if you hadn't, you can't help being a lady. You come of good stock on both sides, and that's a great thing. You have the appearance and the instincts of a decent woman, and for that I thank God. But now, remember, I can't help you to do anything except to enter some ordinary

career. I can't give you either money or influence. In spite of our name, and the fact that your mother's great-grandfather was a person of some importance, we can do nothing now. I've been thinking for some time that it would be a pity if you had to take up some ordinary profession. I've been hoping that we might get a chance of finding some original opening for you, and now I think we've got it. That's the secret, if you can do something which everybody else hasn't done a thousand times before, there may be some chance for you. Now whoever heard of anybody going to Japan as a governess? And yet look at your friend Dorothy. I should say she has done very well for herself. She seems to have been very happy there, she has travelled, seen a bit of the world, which I for one shall never see, she has been able to mix with different sorts of people, and now she's going to marry some smart young consul. My dear child, if she'd been sitting in an office in the City all this time she'd never have hatched out half such a golden egg, I'm sure. One must launch out a bit in this world if one wants to do anything. Now you see why I hope you'll take Dorothy's place. I really hope you'll be able to do likewise, or even better. It's terribly far away, right on the other side of the world, and we shall miss you very much, but we should feel it far more if you had to keep your nose to some grey grindstone here. And then I'm rather anxious, for I know nothing of Japan, though my instinct seems to tell me that the Japanese are a nation of gentlemen. Then if you're unhappy you can always come back at once. You'd get quite a good start there with this millionaire, and I dare say we can get you some letters of introduction."

He embraced his daughter, and all was settled.

Although the ship was now in the Red Sea, Pim continued his walks twice a day, and Mary Welford heard him walking. Long strides, rubber soles, no shine or springiness in his hair, and little drops of sweat on his scarlet forehead. Divine Service will be held in the saloon at 10 A.M. Again she didn't go.

"I hope you won't think it impertinent of me to say so, but I notice you didn't come to our little service this morning?"

Why "little?" she wondered.

"No. It was so hot."

"Do you go to church at Home?"

"Oh, yes, a family habit."

"But you don't go only from habit?"

"No, I suppose not."

"You only suppose——?"

"Well, if you want to know, since my brother was gassed in the war I have less faith in God."

He knew he had put his foot in it, but he couldn't hold his tongue.

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry. But surely——"

"Don't let's talk about it. And don't worry about my soul. I'm quite good, and it's too hot to talk about these things."

"D'you feel the heat very much?"

"Frightfully."

"Shall I get you an ice?"

"Oh do."

So that was it. Devotion to a brother killed in the war. Thank goodness it was only a brother. When he came back with the ice he would lead the conversation into brighter channels.

"May I ask why you're going to Japan? I mean is it simply pleasure or——?"

He knew it wasn't pleasure.

"Or what?" she asked.

"Well, do tell me."

"I'm going to teach."

"Are you really? How jolly! Where?"

"In Tokyo."

"A school?"

"No, a family."

"Really?" He paused expectantly. She said nothing. She's very shy, he thought. He's very tedious, she thought, he's a dreadful bore and I wish I could shake him off.

Between Colombo and Singapore he proposed to her twice. The heat made him amorous. She avoided him as much as possible, yet all the time she was longing for a lover. She stood on deck, in a secluded corner behind a boat, almost every night, by herself, very late, listening to the continuous gurgling rush of water in the tropical darkness, and sometimes, soon after sunset, when it was already too late to distinguish the meeting-place of sea and sky, and the air was warm and languorous, a deep and vapory violet-blue, she would lean over the rail, gazing into the void, full of self-pity, and hungry, hungry with a powerful, virginal, gnawing, nameless hunger, so that the young English lady wanted sometimes to scream, to cry out like an animal with a howl agonised and discordant. Yet she was quite an ordinary girl, so instead of screaming she sighed; cheated herself with hope, and went to bed. But often she stood alone on the poop for a long time in the darkness, looking down. From under the stern, which seemed very high,

from under the dully vibrating screw, myriads of white-flamed needles were pouring forth, churning out and scattering with a ceaseless seething and swishing; they extricated themselves and were instantly whirled away into the palely undulating track of the ship.

Sometimes, on the way back to her cabin, she would see somebody else, some figure in the dim light, leaning with elbows on the rail, and gazing down, as she had been doing, at that terrific phosphorescence, luminous and yet sombre. One figure of a young man she often saw, always in the same place, and wondered who it was and what he was thinking: he never looked at her. And when at last she went to bed and switched off the light a heavy darkness descended at once, the sound of the sea at once seemed much louder, and the starry sky, swaying and tilting rhythmically but unevenly, appeared in the porthole. It was usually a long time before she could get to sleep, perhaps because of the heat and the whirring of the electric fan, and perhaps not.

When she got up one morning she heard that somebody had fallen overboard during the night, a young stoker called Bert Thompson. A pure accident, it was explained. The passengers were "quite upset," but the incident was quickly forgotten.

The same evening Mr. Pim, with white flannel trousers and a jaunty step, sought out Miss Welford. He had heard in the smoking room the truth about Bert Thompson, and hoped, by handing it on artistically to the object of his desire, to appeal to her better nature and thus advertise his own. He intended to induce in her, instead of her usual hardness and coldness towards him, a moment of emotional weakness,

which he would employ to demonstrate his own strength. He meant, in fact, to use Bert Thompson's death as a weapon for his own advantage.

"Enjoying the air?" he asked breezily without waiting for an answer. "It *is* cooler to-night, isn't it? By the by, I suppose you heard of that most unfortunate business last night? The accident——?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'm sorry to say that it wasn't an accident. Don't say anything, but d'you know, as a matter of fact, he threw himself overboard."

Pim paused expectantly.

Mary Welford was moved. She had never been so near to anything like that before. She might even have seen him. Bert Thompson. It sounded such a helpless sort of name.

"Oh, why?" she said in a low voice, looking up with her gentle eyes, and trying not to show that she was touched.

Pim was so affected by her appearance at this moment, of which he felt himself to have been the cause, that he went on speaking eagerly—so that Mary Welford was caught by a sudden revulsion: she thought he seemed to be almost gloating over the story, like a journalist over some ghastly but profitable news——

"Yes, it's dreadfully sad. His shipmates say he was a topping young chap, but lately a bit moody. It is supposed that he lost somebody who was very dear to him, and that this worked on his nerves. So last night, when nobody was about, he just dropped quietly over the side. He left a note for the captain, who very considerately hushed it all up as much as he could."

The young clergyman's taut, perspiring face was very close to hers, and half of it glistened in the lamplight. She drew back a little.

"Poor, poor fellow!" he was saying. "They say he had no relations living but an old grandfather. It'll break the poor old man's heart. Ah, if only I could have got hold of that lad I would have talked him round, convinced him that he had friends, persuaded him, uplifted him——"

"Well, if you hadn't wasted so much time with me," she exclaimed, surprised at her own violence, "you could probably have prevented a suicide."

"Wasted! Mary!" Awkwardly, he caught hold of her hand with his, which was hot.

She didn't try to withdraw it, she simply said quickly:

"All right, you can hold on to my hand until Doomsday, it doesn't make the slightest difference, it doesn't make the faintest impression."

"How cold-hearted you are," he said in a fawning, reproachful voice, thinking he was being lover-like.

"Absolutely."

It was a particularly warm evening. Mr. Pim was more than exasperated. He so badly wanted to help himself to love that he couldn't help himself from making a plunge—as he put it to his sister in a letter afterwards. He suddenly, hotly, flung himself upon the girl and squeezed her in his arms. She felt his long damp nose touch her cheek, and gave a little scream; struggling for almost half a minute to be free, struggling in silence, panting, but the priest, more hotly panting, held her tightly, and kissed her with his fumbling lips.

"You . . . you swine!" she cried, "let—go—get out—leave me—go—go—go to *hell!*"

She got away from him, ran, panting, furious and dishevelled, to her cabin, patted her hair in the glass, washed her face in disinfectant and sat down on the edge of her bunk.

Pim suddenly appeared in the doorway.

She stood up.

He apologised abjectly.

"Can't you *see* that I can't stand you?" she said.

He looked at her reproachfully.

She looked at her watch.

"Forgive me," he said, overwhelmed with a desire to be tactful, "I couldn't bear to think that—that if there wasn't somebody to take care of you—you might become a—a surplus woman."

"*What!* What do you mean! How dare you?"

"Don't get angry, please don't get angry, but you know there are supposed to be at Home two million——"

"Good heavens, what are you talking about! Do you think you're the only man I've ever seen? Good Lord, I'd rather marry a Japanese any day."

Pained, the missionary at once withdrew. For the rest of the voyage he took a prominent part in the deck games.

Miss Welford is still unmarried.

A BRUTAL SENTIMENTALIST

A BRUTAL SENTIMENTALIST

In London, a year or two ago, Tonoki, an unattached member of the Japanese diplomatic service, became seriously ill for the second time in his life. He had an operation, and was obliged to endure a long convalescence, during which his wife came for a few minutes every day. She sometimes brought the youngest child, a little girl, who was a great joy to him. The two boys were at school in Japan, and he often wished, but never expressed a wish, that he could see them. His wife, known as Madame Tonoki, came in a closed car with flowers. She was neatly and smartly dressed, very quiet, and her face was very well made up. Like most Japanese women abroad, she was, on the surface, rather French in style. She said little to Tonoki, sat with her hands folded in her lap, and spoke precisely, cheerfully and absolutely without affectation to the nurses, who said she was "a dainty little thing." They were always rather shocked to know that she never kissed her husband good-bye, but left him with a low bow, her hands on her knees, and her feet very close together, the toes slightly turned in. She was so cleverly dressed, and her heels were so high, that they never noticed how short her legs were.

Tonoki could hardly move, and fortified himself with the patience of powerlessness. So often in his life he had even grudged the short hours given to

sleep, that it was difficult now to get used to lying on his back in a nursing home. He lay most of the time with his eyes shut, seldom asked for anything, did what he was told, and always smiled when spoken to, so that he was what nurses call a good patient. Sometimes, thinking he was asleep, they hesitated to speak to him.

"They say," said one nurse, "these Orientals are that close you can't get anything out of them."

"If you ask me, Maudy," said another, "he's not close, he's got something on his mind."

They treated the quiet invalid with the elaborately regulated intelligence rather as if they had to do with a child.

"I've brought you the little cat again. Really, she's such an intelligent little pussy. Only yesterday——"

"Thank you," said Tonoki, looking at the top of a brown house on the other side of the street, where a maid was shaking a duster out of a window, which she presently closed. Sometimes she shook the duster more than was really necessary, rather slowly and forcibly, because she wanted to watch something down the street. But she always closed the window again (at the bottom, at any rate) and disappeared.

He who had never had time to think began to twirl slowly in his mind the globe of his life, and pondered on the geography of experience. He would hardly have supposed that at forty-four his mind was malleable, but now certainly old facts came home to him with new force, reverberating like blows of a hammer. Some organic change made him realize truth after truth with shock after shock, and each

time his heart beat dully, and he could feel his face suffused with blood—he who had hardly blushed since puberty.

His first misgiving still held him. He had been lying one afternoon, still hardly conscious, looking at the top of the brown house in the afternoon sunshine above the window-sill (perhaps that house was also a nursing home—they said most of the houses in this street were nursing homes—certainly it was a very quiet street, near Lancaster Gate, and he knew whereabouts that was) when he suddenly remembered how he had said to Wilmington quite lately:

"You know it is my forty-fourth birthday? You know in Japan we say a man has only fifty years to live? That means I've got six years left."

He had said it lightly, because he felt it lightly enough, having been brought up as strictly as possible in the Japanese tradition. As a young boy, for example, an immense impression had been made on him by the *seppuku* story of his relation Osoné Masao. He recalled it now quite distinctly, almost word for word, as it had been related on a drowsy spring afternoon in Kyoto more than thirty years ago —thirty years! ah, this transitory life.

"One day when I was a boy," Osoné had said (not being very old even then), "that is to say about the beginning of Meiji, I was on my way home from school with some classmates, when we amused ourselves by teasing the ducks kept by a dealer in poultry. While we were chasing them here and there the man came out of his house to punish us, and my friends ran away. He nearly caught me, so I turned round suddenly and drew my sword. The man retreated,

and I rejoined my friends. We laughed and played for some time, and then I went home. I didn't know that my great-uncle had seen me in the act of threatening the tradesman.

"When I got home there was a strained atmosphere in the house. I knew at once that something was wrong. My mother and grandmother and great-uncle were all dressed in formal style. I was ordered to wash myself and dress in white. I couldn't tell what all this meant. I began to anticipate disaster. My heart was beating fast. I was thoroughly upset. What is worse than suspense?

"When I was ready I was called into a room where my mother and grandmother were present, while the place of honour was occupied by my great-uncle. I was made to sit facing him several feet away. I bowed, and with my hands still on the floor awaited his command.

"After a fatal silence my great-uncle addressed me by name.

" 'You are a criminal,' he said. 'I saw you to-day threatening a man of the merchant class by drawing your sword. That is an act of shame. It is an insult to your sword, the soul of the Samurai, to your parents, to your ancestors, to your family. You have disgraced yourself by abusing your privilege of being armed with a sword. It remains for you to be punished. In such an instance the tradition and honour of your family, lest further disgrace be heaped on them by so despicable a person as yourself, demand your life. Out of mercy you will be saved from the humiliation of the punishment being inflicted on you by any hand but your own. In the absence of your father, and as the eldest of the relatives of the family,

I command that you shall punish yourself by your own hand.'

"He clapped his hands twice, and a small sword was brought in on a lacquered wooden stand. My great-uncle then instructed me how to perform the act of suicide by disembowelment. The sword was placed before me.

" 'Do it,' he said.

"I implored pardon solemnly, and then wildly promised in tears not to disgrace the sword again. This prayer was not answered. My great-uncle, seeing me hesitate, said:

" 'You are a coward and too spiritless to perform the act. Shame on you, if you require the help of others.'

"The fount of cowardice forced me to muster up all the strength that was in me, and in a kind of suddenly tranquil terror I stretched out my hand for the sword. I could see everything quite clearly, but I don't remember that I actually took it up in my hand.

" 'Well, done. You are pardoned.' The relentless face of my great-uncle relaxed into a thin smile, and he said that now I should be able to meet death without fear or hesitation. The joy of escaping death can only be known by those who have experienced it, but it is mixed with the pain of the ordeal, which I am hardly likely to forget."

The effect of this story on the mind of the young Tonoki had been to rid him to a great extent of the fear of death, a thing he realised to be near to us always. He had once repeated it to Wilmington, who had said, "Good God! As lately as that?" and that it reminded him of Dostoievsky being pardoned on the scaffold. It was lucky that Wilmington was in London now, and came to see him so often.

"Well, Tonoki," the Englishman had said, "I think we have proved that the old parrot cry about 'East is East' is only a half-truth, for we certainly have some understanding of each other."

When Tonoki had said that he had only six more years to live, Wilmington had pooh-poohed the idea, and Tonoki had answered:

"I'm not afraid to die. I've tried to do my duty to my Emperor and my country, and if I'm lucky I may be allowed to live longer. But you know we say in Japan that 'when one speaks of the future, devils are listening'."

He had spoken cheerfully, but now he was alone, and faced with the fact again, and in the meantime it had grown in significance. He found that he must learn himself in six years. He must wake up. After a life without leisure he must lie still and examine himself. At this thought his breathing became laboured, he was conscious of the beating of his heart and of having a flushed face. A nurse who happened to be near him then, asked if he wanted anything, and told him to lie still. He smiled, said he was very comfortable, wanted nothing, and asked her not to trouble herself.

He remembered how his father had intended to retire to a little house on the mountain side, where he should spend the last years of his life cleansing himself from worldly thoughts and things. He himself didn't feel now so much the need for purification (that would come later, for he was quite ready to admit himself a sinner) as for self-knowledge. I must learn to know myself, he thought, I must make myself calm. And the blood seemed to surge to his face again, as when one gains temporary relief from

tension or danger, and knows there is still time to escape.

After this first alarm he found it difficult to fix anything in his mind, and it was some time before he found himself engaged once more in a mental effort of any importance. When he did think at all, he was dominated by his memory, and although he tried to reconstruct everything properly, and in the right order of time, he could never keep to this plan. To find lost details there were exhausting struggles, the last events kept coming first, and the first last, nothing would fix itself or stay put, everything kept shifting so as to be almost nightmarish, for painful discoveries recurred with undiminishing novelty, until once or twice he thought of asking the doctor about his heart, and even about his brain.

Two clear things always remained: this fact that he must try and learn himself in these six last years (he never thought there might be more time left; only he realised there might be less) and the question as to how it was going to be done. He would talk to Wilmington about it.

It says something for Wilmington that a Japanese should consider consulting him on such inward matters. Tonoki had known him, off and on, for years. That in itself wouldn't be enough, but they had been in China together, and common dangers had brought them into a position of intimacy and mutual respect. He had learnt to respect Wilmington because he had learnt to trust him. He had always attached importance to everything Wilmington said, for every word seemed to proceed from an ordered and penetrating mind. Wilmington was aware of his responsibility, knew what he had to live up to, and

knew pretty well how to do it. One liked Wilmington because he had definite opinions, was without fear, could speak his mind straightly, was singularly free from prejudice, seldom frivolous, and never, even when silent, never dull. Wilmington had treated him confidentially, almost as an equal, and to that kindness Tonoki had done his best to respond. His memory was so full of what Wilmington had said to him and of what he had said to Wilmington that he didn't always know which was which.

The truth was, they had talked so much, so often, so widely and deeply, that even many of the dark places of Tonoki's mind and life, even such sacred posessions as his opinions and love of his own country, however personal, were lighted permanently, for better or worse, by the rays of Wilmington's ideas. The Englishman's mind was more complicated, more vigorous and more original than his own, which was now so teeming with the germinations of Wilmington's innumerable sowings, conscious and casual, that, if he had been a younger man, it might have been on the way to becoming greatly changed. However, a man is born rather than made, and also they had met comparatively late in life. Wilmington was a year or two younger than Tonoki, and at the time of their first meeting it is doubtful whether the Englishman's opinions were quite formed. Indeed, it is doubtful if they were ever quite formed, for Wilmington was too wise to be afraid of doubting. He was a man of character, definite and downright enough, but if one studied him carefully, if Tonoki could have known him as well as he tried to make himself believe that he knew him, it would appear that Wilmington didn't like trying to pin down any-

thing beyond obvious fallacies either in an opponent's argument or in general. He was no philosopher, that he should be one to pursue the butterflies of eternity with the nets and killing-bottles of time. In fact, magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod sequeretur; there was more that he fled than followed. Like so many thoughtful men of our time, he would take refuge, for all his straightforwardness, in suspended judgments. Who says that they're wrong?

Tonoki had in some ways been more frank with Wilmington than with any Japanese: it so often happens that people will listen to a foreigner when they won't listen to one of their own countrymen, and even of the Japanese, the most insular people in the world, this is sometimes true. It is also true of the English—they, too, live on an island. Although Tonoki, in spite of his natural honesty, had no small opinion of himself, he had an almost superstitious opinion of Wilmington. Not only did Wilmington obviously know and appreciate him more than anyone else had ever done or could ever do, but he felt flattered that this English gentleman, familiar with some of the great, should take so much notice of him. And now, after having known Wilmington for years, he had driven himself into this self-examination.

He didn't turn restlessly on the pillow, he lay on his back, breathing lightly now and evenly, feeling calmer and stronger, and ready to consider the past. His cheek-bones were rather high, even for a Japanese, and he was so sensitive about them that he always made a joke about them when he met foreigners. The back of his head, now at ease in a white pillow, was straight from crown to nape, and when Wilmington once said banteringly that all Japanese have straight-

backed heads, Tonoki at once indignantly with hand and tongue claimed a round cranium. Of course a Japanese has some reason to be touchy. It was long before the American immigration trouble that Tonoki had heard somebody ask in reference to himself: "Who's your little yellow friend?" And at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo he had once overheard a man murmuring in a lady's ear: "Je ne peux pas supporter les indigènes. I want to go to Shanghai and see some white people." How deep such chance remarks as these cut their way into the heart of the Japanese only the future can reveal.

"I am glad to be yellow," Tonoki had once said to Wilmington, "if to be white is like that."

It was in Macao, and he had pointed to a great lout of a white man sprawling unpleasantly in a gutter before a group of slim Chinese girls.

As for this cursed business of colour, Wilmington of course never gave it any personal direction. It ought to be easy enough for any enlightened Englishman to be utterly without colour prejudice, but it isn't easy for a Japanese, however enlightened, ever to forget his tint before the howling masses of America and Australia. All these facts help to indicate the unusual nature of the friendship between these two men.

The head of Tonoki, pale, square, calm, stern and almost stately, lay on the dead-white pillow, and he remembered that his childhood had not been happy. His mother had died when he was small. He fancied he could remember her, and cherished a vague image of her, made up of a photograph, of fantasy and hearsay and thwarted instincts, with a touch of his own character thrown back; while a sash with a

certain pattern, the flowers of the paulownia tree and some curious and uncertainly recurring scents always reminded him of her, though he knew not why. Hard, hard he grew in his motherless boyhood, for unshed tears petrify. What a home it had been! Frigid, severe, hard, dry, cold, austere, presided over by a frowning father who always said "Do this!" and "Don't do that!"; who lived like an ascetic, fanatically conventional and conservative; who never allowed him money; and who had only one or two friends, old men, sinister, powerful, reactionary and embittered, moving behind and above the great men who in those days controlled the country. In Japan particularly there are always such men, and his father's friends were positive gods of intrigue. His only sister was early married, and the house had been run by a deaf and solitary aunt.

He had found, however, some kind of happiness at school. The school life in those days was much harder than it is now, and Kumamoto was scarcely soft at any time, but at any rate the companionship of other boys was worth having, and rigid military discipline with them better than rigid paternal discipline without them.

"For the first eighteen years of my life," he had once told Wilmington, "I didn't know home at all. You know what that means in Japan. Not for me the thousand pleasant memories and intimacies of the family circle (which you in Europe treat lightly or mock at, though they are sacred to us), delights changing with the delightful changing of the seasons, the tenderness of parents, the affection of brothers and sisters, the snug winter nights round the firebox, the games and music and story-telling. None of that

for me. No, I used to sit up alone with icy feet and burning brain studying for examinations. In those days many students died of overwork. You say Rome wasn't built in a day, but modern Japan, our great Japan, was built in a generation: those students helped to pay the price for it. If I had failed in an examination I would have killed myself at once. In those days I learnt the whole English dictionary by heart, two pages a day. . . . And always my father frowned.

"But when I was eighteen I learnt the real meaning of the family, and I can never forget it. For the first time in my life I fell ill. I had a bad fever just at the time I was due to go home from school. I sent a postcard to my father to say that a slight cold prevented me from returning home until later. It was really typhoid that I had. They took me to the hospital and I nearly died.

"When I began to recover I felt extremely weak and full of despair. What was there to live for? I could look forward to nothing, I didn't want to return home, and I hoped soon to die. Then one day they said someone had come to see me. 'A mistake,' I said, and turned my face to the wall. What a grim mistake! There was nobody to come and see me. And then, as if in a dream, I thought I heard somebody call my name: 'Taro!' The sound was vaguely familiar. Could it possibly be real? I turned over. In the doorway stood my father. 'Taro!' he said again, and his deep voice had in it a kind of thrilling vibration. It was the first time I had ever seen him show any signs of feeling. His hands were clenched at his sides, and his face was a mixture of terror, love and anxiety. I can never forget his eyes at that

moment, although he has been dead for many years. Even now I shudder to think how deeply moved he must have been. 'Why didn't you tell me?' he said in a voice of strange yearning and tenderness that seemed to come right out of his belly. Neither of us could keep back our tears. From that time I had no doubts. I knew then that the severity of all those years came out of a deep, deep love."

Wilmington had commented on this conclusion, saying that in Europe we order things differently and sometimes rebel against such parents; remarking, however, that it may require even more spirit not to rebel against them; and reflecting on the immense traditional force of Japanese discipline, which seems to have made resistance of any kind very nearly unthinkable.

Before Tonoki's marriage (which was arranged without his knowledge) he only saw his wife once: they exchanged bows with extreme formality, and being in company the girl did her best to hide the pretty confusion she felt. Until that time Tonoki's relations with women had been confined to a single furtive escapade. Not very long after his marriage, when he held his first official position in Tokyo, a very junior one, he formed an attachment for a geisha, splendid while it lasted, but costly; and much later there had been a more tentative affair, this also with a Japanese woman. Although he had been so much abroad he had never got far beyond the conversational stage with foreign women. He didn't like the way they appeared to make advances, and he had rather puritanical ideas which grew stronger as he got older. The idea of dissipation really disturbed him. However, he was getting now to a dangerous

age, and when he got back to Japan he intended to—— but old men, he told himself (he was forty-four!), must be careful not to make fools of themselves.

His life had been devoted to the service of his country, which had completed his "education" by sending him abroad. He had been pretty successful, had a good record and a good opinion of himself, and was still not without ambition, though perhaps he was hardly rich or dishonest enough to get very far now. He had travelled a good deal, doing diplomatic odd jobs with the strong intuition and talent for intrigue he had inherited from his father, and had had altogether a varied, useful, "successful," extremely hard-working, self-sacrificing and patriotic career.

But now that he came to meditation, he gradually began to realise that he hadn't used his experience much for his personal benefit, even mentally. Everything he had learnt had been applied directly to his country's life rather than to his own, and even now, with his head on the pillow, and only six years in which to make his peace with himself, he was inclined to plot and plan all the time for Japan and not for Tonoki. In fact, it seemed that he could only think in national terms, in terms of the herd. He didn't realise that even this was partly due to the influence of Wilmington, who had, when in Japan, been so interested in the country (for whose welfare he had occasionally been able to use a little influence) that he had unknowingly confirmed many of Tonoki's ingrained tendencies. Not all of these by any means deserved encouragement, but Wilmington had also often criticised him, saying that he was too romantic and too orthodox and not independent enough, and that he hadn't enough faith in science, and that he

relied too much on the Asiatic principles in his nature and on the political dogmas they could most easily support, and that he didn't do, didn't begin to do, nearly enough hard constructive thinking. To all this Tonoki had listened patiently, sometimes with his head on one side, for he was never quite sure whether Wilmington was joking or not; most of it he had answered, contradicting, denying or defending; all of it he had remembered; but beyond this he couldn't do. Whether on account of his character, or his training, or both, he certainly couldn't broadly and minutely criticise himself—but then, who can?

He realised this suddenly, and felt almost alarmed about it. Then he looked round for Wilmington, but Wilmington wasn't there then. He saw the morning sunlight on the yellow-brown house above the window-sill, and decided that he had plenty of confidence in his own character, and was ready for any battle. For a moment he chided himself, suspecting that it might be a weakness at his age to indulge in mere introspection. His arms were folded under the sheet, and he could feel the muscles of his chest. When he thought how he had blushed at the idea of having only six years to find himself out, he blushed again. Angered by such weakness, he compressed his lips. He had a strong mouth, and it struck a Japanese visitor who came later in the day with some political news. Immediately afterwards, Tonoki's brain was occupied with the concerns of his country, and he forgot that he had ever meant to examine himself.

He slept well that night, and didn't dream at all, but he woke up very early in the morning with his mind on the past, not of his country, but of himself.

His memory kept intruding on his imagination, and the further past became the clearer. During the morning his wife arrived, and immediately understood something of his condition. She asked him politely, as if he were a perfect stranger and a superior, please not to tire his honourable brain with too many thoughts. He glanced at her rather sharply, and admired, for the thousandth time, her quickness, and then her elegance. To-day she had brought him violets. He never thanked her for the flowers, but always noticed them carefully. After she had gone, a whole episode, apparently for no reason at all, started clearly out of the recesses of his memory. It was the swimming party at Suginoüra.

Why he should recall now, with peculiar vividness, the events of ten days when he was sixteen, he couldn't explain. And why should there be about those ten days any particular significance? In the ordinary course of school life it had been the custom for the students to spend part of the summer holidays in some way organised by the school. Sometimes they climbed mountains, or made pilgrimages with their teachers to famous places. This time a party of twenty were sent to swim in charge of the teacher of gymnastics. Sometimes on such expeditions they could forget for half an hour the vistas of examinations before them, and in their faces, bleached with overwork and prematurely old, a fire of youthful blood would burst into flower.

Although the place was called the Beach of Cryptomerias, the only trees were pines. It is on a side of the sacred island called Itsukushima remote from the shrine and town, and was then a place of peace. The students lodged in a great empty inn, between

which and the silent bay was a double row of pines. The inn stood on a flat spit of land, backed by a few rice fields, at that season a brilliant green, and surrounded on all sides but one with steep and wooded heights entirely covered with pines. It was very silent, for the waters of Seto Naikai, the inland sea, are so calm, mirrors of eternal afternoon among untroubled islands, and even in storms seethe only faintly on the sand.

At Suginoüra it is always afternoon. The sun slants through the pines and finds the place mostly in shadow, the gliding sampans come and go, cast silent anchor in the transparent water and swing slowly on the elongated image of a sun-silver sail. They furl and spread their sails, ribbed with bamboo, they come and drifting go, they are there, they are gone. The water in the morning was warm and calm, and never could water be greener or clearer, while the sun lacquered the skins of the swimmers to an orange-tawny. One swam under water, calmly in the warm clearness, and putting one's head out into the sun, could hear shrilling in the tall pines the cicadas that are the very voice of summer. Somebody laughed and splashed, and the sounds of the ripples were lost, the sun was hot, and the smell of the green pines came out over the clear water like a warm and fragrant human breath.

In the afternoons Tonoki sometimes walked the ferny hill paths under the pines, noticing everything, for in those days his mind was keen enough to yearn continuously for the experience of knowledge. His eyes were quick enough to spot a little tree frog winking on a tuft of moss, or the shy retreat of one of the coral-coloured crabs that could be found far

up from the sea; but it was the insects he particularly noticed, caddis-worms and geometers; the swarms of boat-insects that fled rustling across the rocks with comic haste; the flies, moths and beetles that patterned the lamplit walls of the inn rooms at night with infinitely varied coloured constellations; spiders on dewy threads; fireflies; and the guiding fly called *michi-shirubé,* which shows lost travellers the way to the village . . . a world of palpable mysteries. When he spoke once of his boyish interest in entomology, Wilmington said:

"Quite a good thing. Japan is a perfect country for bug-hunters, globe-trotters, botanists, painters and the Japanese. By God, if I were a painter I'd call myself Koizumi and stay there for the rest of my life. As for other people—well, anyway, it's a pity that the constitution of a bee-hive, queen bee and all, should still be considered suitable for a nation of human beings."

Now, was he joking or not? Wilmington had a great love for Japan, but you'd never have guessed it from the way he loved to mock at Japanese things.

Tonoki now, thinking even of boyhood's events, couldn't disassociate Wilmington's opinions from anything. From remembering the pines of Itsukushima (who could forget them, there is one, hanging tortuously stiff from an islet, that throws its shadow on a biscuit-coloured cliff: from a distance they seem never to move, clean-cut and sharp-coloured, as under glass; but when nearer we know they are seldom silent, and that there is nothing more haunting and disturbing than their million-needled otherworldly murmur), he remembered saying once to Wilmington:

"I've never seen any trees anywhere so picturesque as the Japanese pines."

Then came to his mind the grove of thousand-year-old trees on the shore at Maiko, contorted black dragons poised in dreadful quiet above the clean white sand, shadowy and forbidding, taloned and scaly, blind witnesses of secret history. He used to go and see a Chinese millionaire, an eccentric polygamist, who had a pink wooden mansion among those trees. It was furnished in the European style and had a classical view of Awaji-shima on the opposite shore.

Oh, and there was Wilmington's very slightly condescending smile, at which he had said anxiously:

"Why do you smile? Don't you agree with me?"

"But of course I think the Japanese pines are wonderful."

Tonoki had remained unconvinced of the reason for the smile. Was it because he had used the word "picturesque"? No, Wilmington was always smiling like that. . . .

Step by step he forced back his wandering thoughts to the swimming party at Suginoüra. Suginoüra! His whole being was full of a delightfully voluptuous sensation of health and serenity. No special happening could be picked out of those far-away ten days—unless those conversations and playful familiarities with the country maid at the inn; artless talk, burningly meaningless words, charged with the whole force of the future behind the queer and awkward, but intensely amorous longings of adolescence. He lay on the sand at noon and dreamed of her apricot thighs, soft under silk.

He swam with his schoolfellows in sun-varnished vigour, sharing with them the rough living, the

peace and warmth and silence. Wasn't that all? But now the whole ten days from nearly thirty years ago was concentrated into a single moment of intense happiness, ecstasy, as if there met in him at once faith, hope and love; all the tremulous, delightful, painful kindling of desire and hope, with the delirious blaze of love fulfilled, and the still flame, the serene equipoise of fulfilment and content. He must have felt, he seemed to remember feeling at the time, as he felt repeated now, one perfect moment, that vindicated all that life could possibly give or take away; one moment worth a lifetime; one moment of evening, the upper sky already dark, a few stars out in a limpid sky, the last light above the black ridges of the mainland opposite, a few lights moving on the water, a woman walking away, the sound of a sleeper's breath, and somewhere the stray notes of a bamboo flute:

> . . . sad airs so wild and slow
> That his own cheek is wet with quiet tears.

Something was lost! Tonoki was agitated. What had he just been thinking of? And before that? He felt quite exhausted after so much thinking, for he was still convalescent. His eyes were closed. His face, on the white pillow, was an expressionless mask. He thought for a moment that he could hear the sea.

When Wilmington came again Tonoki said something of his feelings.

"Hm," said Wilmington. "If you went back to Suginoüra now, you'd find it agog with motor boats and excursionists. I was there, as a matter of fact, only the year before last. A batch of American tourists were there at the time. 'Oh, say,' they exclaimed, 'isn' the worrer wahm!' "

"Even there?" said Tonoki.

"Suginoüra is like your mind, it's no longer purely Japanese."

"My mind is pure Japanese——"

"You think it is, but it's smeared over and slightly impregnated with Western ideas."

"Of course I've assimilated many Western ideas, but they don't change my real character. It is a great gift of Japanese people that they can assimilate foreign civilisations without their real character changing."

"It is a great gift of monkeys that they can imitate men and yet still remain monkeys. But if a man, or a nation, assimilates ideas, of course they change his character!"

"But——"

"Look here, you and your country have lost your innocence. It's no good saying 'I remember, I remember,' and dreaming of your boyhood. I shouldn't be surprised if there was a pretty maidservant at that inn you were talking about——"

Tonoki started.

"At any rate, there'll be no more swimming parties at Suginoüra, moon-gazing and what not. It's time to stop staring at your navels. You'll have to wake up, before the world laughs at you."

"You forget what we've done in the last fifty years."

"I do not forget. But let me tell you this. Even though you've just been ill, there's no excuse for being so disgustingly sentimental."

This remark made a great impression on Tonoki, and started in him a whole new train of thought, so that when Wilmington came again, that Englishman

was surprised to see him looking mournful and wasted, and yet restless, as if with suppressed excitement.

"How are you, old man?" said Wilmington.

"Please sit down."

"You look a bit tired. Wouldn't you rather be left in peace? Let me come another day."

"No, I'm all right. But I must speak to you, I wish very much to say something to you—to-day."

"But why to-day? Don't overtire yourself."

"Please hear me to the end."

The Japanese began to speak with obvious emotion. "I believe that Roman Catholics, when they're going to die, tell all their sins to a priest. I want to do the same."

"Good God, do you want to become a Christian——?"

"No, no, no. You're the priest. I want you to hear my confession."

"But, look here, you're not going to die."

"If not now, then after six years. Please listen to me. I'm not going to tell you the story of my life; but you know, while lying here, I've had time to think. It is unusual for me. Since I left the university I've thought more of my duty than myself. I accuse myself now, I doubt myself, I despise myself, I wish to die. There's nobody but you to whom I can say these things." He paused. "You remember the great earthquake of 1923?"

"I do. I was in Spain at the time, and it was even recorded on the seismographs there."

"I was, as you know, in Tokyo. There's no need to describe all the horrors. I took refuge, as I've told

you before, in the house of a certain highly placed official, a relative of my wife's family. His house had suffered very little damage. I remained with him several weeks, and then went into the country. As long as I stayed in Tokyo with this man—there's no need to tell you his name, so I'll call him Colonel K.—I went with him every day to his improvised office, and tried to help with some of the work of restoring order. And every day I heard the most hideous stories. A man came to me selling postcards. They were photographs of heaps, mountains, of charred and mutilated corpses. He explained with eagerness, almost enthusiasm, trying to work on my nerves with his graphic descriptions, that these were the bodies of whores. The keepers of the licensed houses had locked them in, fearing, even when they were screaming with terror at the approach of the flames, that the young girls might take advantage of their liberty to try and escape. . . . The postcard-seller, with an ingratiating smile, told me that these photographs were unique, and only ten *sen* apiece —'What!' I said, 'Are you human? Aren't you ashamed to be selling these things?' 'Not at all,' he said, 'for my children are starving, and this is the only way I can get food for them.' What could I say to that? Another day a woman, covered with repulsive scars, told me how her husband and children and her father had been forced, by the stampede of a frantic crowd, over the side of a bridge into a hissing canal on which floated a thick scum of boiling human fat. Some had jumped in there to escape from the fire, and thinking the water was only warm had been scalded to death."

"Enough," said Wilmington. "I was in the war.

That was enough for me. I don't want to hear all this. Why do you tell it to me? This isn't a confession."

"I'm coming to that," said Tonoki. "The next thing I heard was a piece of political news——"

"But I don't want to hear it."

"I have to tell you, because I want you to understand the state of mind I got into from hearing such things. As you know, I've always had a secret sympathy with the Liberals in my country, though my position prevents me even thinking of telling anybody that. I think you've never heard of a man called Osugi? He was a man of gentle character, though a mild socialist—a mere theorist, absolutely opposed to violence. He was seized, together with his wife and her nephew, a boy of seven, and thrown into prison, where they were visited by a police captain called Amakasu, who suddenly caught Osugi from behind, threw him down, twisting his wrist behind him, and then, gripping his neck with his right arm and kneeling on his back, strangled him to death. It took just ten minutes to make sure that he was dead. Captain Amakasu of the Imperial Japanese Gendarmerie then treated the lady in the same way. The child was strangled with a piece of rope. Amakasu was tried for murder and sentenced to ten years penal servitude, but was released in 1927, and is now regarded by many of our patriots as a hero. . . . In another place, in a police station, fourteen persons who had been imprisoned for being socialists, were stabbed to death by their guards—acting, no doubt, on instructions from headquarters, for in this case no trial was held of the murderers."

"It is not fair," said Wilmington, "to emphasise only the bad things. I have myself heard a lot of

wonderful stories of kindness, heroism and self-sacrifice at that time. I know of a servant girl who lost her life trying to save some foreign children who were not even her neighbours. I know of people who were fed, clothed, housed and started in business out of sheer charity. I could tell you——"

"Wait," said Tonoki, "I haven't finished. I want you to understand that I kept on hearing such things, and trying to forget them—that, of course, was impossible. I worked hard, hoping that that would calm my mind. 'Of course it's a bad time,' said Colonel K., 'but there's nothing to worry about now.' The same day a man asked me out to dinner. It was a poor dinner, I remember, for it was hard enough to get anything just then. Our conversation was about nothing but the earthquake and its results. You can guess the state of mind I was in. Well, this man began to talk about the massacre of Koreans that happened immediately after the disaster. You heard about that?"

"Yes," said Wilmington, always fond of airing his own opinions, "I've always been sorry for the Koreans. When I went to Korea long ago a woman said to me, 'Isn't it weirdly lovely? They call it The Land of Morning Calm, you know. *So* poetical, don't you think?' I said it seemed to me rather a land of ghastly lethargy, of stunned and heart-deadened apathy. I don't entirely blame the Japanese, or even the missionaries, for that: the causes are older and deeper. But go on."

"This man said it was some officials who had started the rumour about the Koreans in Tokyo—they were planning an assassination, they had already killed somebody, and so on. They must accordingly

be blotted out. In the heat of the moment orders were given—you know with what result. 'In connection with this,' said my host, 'there's a certain Colonel K. who is partly responsible.' Imagine my feelings! He had mentioned the name of the very official—my wife's relation—with whom I've told you I was living. I've already said enough about atrocities: I hate to go on. It is enough to say that two Koreans, a man and a woman, took refuge in his house, and that he himself killed them. Using a sword, he struck down first the unresisting man, then the woman, who made no movement, but was only staring at the blood spouting from her husband's body. I can assert that Colonel K. was not a brutal man by nature, but he himself had helped to give the order against the Koreans, in pursuance, as he thought, of his duty. In accordance with that duty he stained his own house, the house of his own children, with innocent blood. Think, how could I go back there after that? I made an excuse to get away into the country, but before I could settle down there I was ordered abroad on a very responsible job. . . . It is only now that I have been able to think, to realise, to confess——"

"Tonoki, you're excited. You'll make yourself ill again. Bygones are bygones. Let the dead bury the dead. I know that you yourself were guilty of no brutality at that time. For that I am very thankful. You have nothing to confess."

"Wait. I am guilty of brutality. Not actively perhaps, but passively, negatively, which is worse. Listen. Until 1923 I was ignorant. These earthquake events taught me to suspect. Now, thanks to my illness, I begin to *know*."

"I think the fact that you were in Tokyo at the time has made you exaggerate. For instance, at Lisbon in the eighteenth century—people always lose their heads at such times, there's something electric, volcanic, that gets into the blood. As for massacres, good Lord, there's nothing in Japan to beat ours in Europe. Our history is one long series of crimes of violence. It was an unbelievable price to pay for those advantages we now enjoy. . . . Remember, I once had a Japanese mistress for a short time. I loved her very much. She was so different, and yet so like a European woman. For her sake I would forgive the Japanese much. You see how honest I am?"

"Ah, you're trying to change the subject and divert my thoughts. You mean to be kind—but very soon the nurse will come and turn you out, for I'm not supposed to talk so much, and I still have something important to say."

"You ought to wait until another day."

"No. Understand that I cannot blame Colonel K., Amakasu and those others. When even civilised men are excited they will do anything, act like savages—— They were doing, I suppose, what they believed to be their duty. Their duty to their Emperor and their country. But look at me, Tonoki Taro, forty-four years of age. I am a rather successful and not unimportant official. 'You're absolutely indispensable, I don't know what we should do without you,' the deputy vice-minister for foreign affairs said to me six months ago. I have a wife and three children, a top-hat, and five decorations from foreign governments in recognition of my services. Why? Because I've always done my duty. My duty

to whom? To my Emperor and my country. Wilmington, don't you see it is the same Emperor and the same country as *theirs?* How can we both be right? If they're right, then I'm wrong. They acted with open violence, but I coldly went away and went on with my work. If they are brutal, I am equally brutal. They may have done what they believed to be right, but I'm doing what I know to be wrong. Tell me, how can I go on? Isn't it better to give up, to resign or to die? I'm not afraid to die. You know that. The other day you told me I am sentimental, and you're right. To-day you told me that I am not brutal, and you're wrong. For I am brutal and sentimental. I despise myself. Tell me you forgive me, tell me what to do!"

Wilmington thought Tonoki was very much overwrought by his illness. This longing to humiliate himself was quite unlike him—more like a Russian: but then the Japanese often reminded him of the Russians.

"Don't worry so much," he said, "don't get excited. You'll soon be all right."

"Oh, I'm not only saying this because I've been ill. Tell me your true thoughts."

"My true thoughts are that you're quite all right. You've always done your duty, and you'll keep on doing it. You're certainly not answerable for the brutalities of other people. If my own brother were a murderer, should I be guilty? No, nonsense. All this talk about confession comes to nothing at all. But I'll tell you one thing. You've been able to hesitate, to doubt, to question yourself. I have always felt that you were not introspective enough, but now I see we may make a good European of

you yet. I tell you, for the fact that you don't take everything for granted I really admire you. So keep your hair on. . . . And now I think I ought to be going."

Tonoki was unused to being praised so directly, and he now looked, in spite of his fatigue and helplessness as he lay back on the pillow, as glad as if he had received a real honour.

The door opened, and a bustling nurse came in.

"Gracious, Mr. Tonoki, whatever am I thinking of? Just look at the time, and you're still talking! You'll excuse me if I make you have a good long rest now. And it's time for your medicine again."

She stepped across the room to a table on which the bottle was standing, and started to pour out the medicine.

Wilmington got up to go. Tonoki beckoned to him.

"There is no doubt that I am brutal and sentimental," he whispered.

Wilmington bent down over the bed.

"So is everybody. We're nearly all brutal and sentimental because we're too weak to be strong and sweet. We can't all be heroes."

He pressed the Japanese hand and went away.

When the nurse had finished fussing round him, when she too had gone away, Tonoki lay still for some time. His eyes were shut, and his mouth was not so firm as usual; it wore a wan, convalescent smile.

There was a long silence. A butterfly from the Park had somehow got into the room, and was now trying to get out again. Fluttering, it succeeded.

But Tonoki didn't see it. When he opened his small black eyes they were more than bright. A tear escaped from each and trickled slowly down his face. But why? Because he was still very weak.

PART II

A PIECE OF GOOD LUCK

A PIECE OF GOOD LUCK

I

THE village of Omura, in the prefecture of F——, consists of one street of grey wooden houses. In front there is nothing but rice-fields. At the back there is an abrupt mountain, too steep for cultivation, and partly covered with pine trees. The view exemplifies the truth that in the Japanese landscape there is no middle distance. No traveller, glancing out of a train window, could expect to see a more typical country village: indeed, Omura is just visible from the railway, though it is doubtful if any passenger ever regards it. And although there is a station not very far away and bearing the name of the next village but one, it is seldom that any of the inhabitants of Omura go in a train. Why should they? Except petty officials and an occasional merchant they have very little reason to move. They live together something like a large family and in more harmony than villagers in most other countries, because they are so notably few differences or causes for differences among them. They are all so much alike, and everybody else's business is such common property as one's own that there is hardly any room for gossip. And there is very little news.

The seasons pass. Here a bare tree is suddenly in flower. On that fence of split bamboos the frail cups of morning glories carry drops of dew in their silken throats. A persimmon tree is hung with fruit

long after the leaves have fallen. The last cosmos flowers are shaken by the autumn wind, and the feathers are ruffled back on the back of a bird. In January the *nanten* bushes at cottage doors are bowed down, with all their bunches of scarlet berries, under a weight of snow. Whenever the new moon appears, all the old thoughts are renewed.

The pines endure. The routine of work in the rice-fields is only varied by the slight variations in the weather. Even quite an intelligent European, were anything so unlikely to happen as that such a person should come here, might be overwhelmed or taken in by this surpassing pastoral peace. A Japanese of a literary turn might, on some summer's afternoon when the street is so placid that one can hear the feet of chickens scuffling in the dust, when one can hear the drops from a water-pipe falling one by one into a runnel at the roadside, when one can hear a drowsy cicada half-way up the mountain—such a man might be put in mind of an old short poem which seems to carry years, even centuries, of experience:

> The dragon-flies are flitting
> Above the village
> Where nothing ever happens.

Somebody yawns. The shadows slowly lengthen. A cat with no tail crosses the road, settles down to sleep in the sun, shuts its eyes, half opens them, shuts them again. . . .

Yet it wouldn't be quite true to say that nothing ever happens. That is, it depends what you mean by nothing. For instance, children are born and people die. Further, the number of children who are born

exceeds the number of people who die. So occasionally a new house goes up, a new collateral family is founded. This has been going on for some time, the process is slow, the change is all but imperceptible. Then again at times a rumour fills the air, a rumour which, though slight, is powerful enough to take hold of the whole body and threaten it with death, just as a man may take an insect between his fingers and (whether you call it caprice, fate or God's will) may let it fly away or else pinch out its entrails. Even at Omura the vibration of earthquakes is sometimes felt. Our imaginary European might feel it as a little link in a chain which includes fatal catastrophes of the forgotten past, dread disasters of the unknown future; nervousness would be excusable, so would fear of God. Within living memory, however, nothing worse of the kind has happened than the dislodging of three tiles from the roof of the barber's shop.

Of course it is obvious that Omura (like Tokyo, or that city of the clouds, New York) is liable to change and accident. And we must take into account other things than changing seasons and acts of God. This is not a village where nothing ever happens, for there is a small cottage at the southern end where life has been in a way more eventful than in any other house. And when anything happens in life, somebody has to suffer for it. To the inhabitants of that house things have happened.

The reader might prefer to know about the "average" life of the village, he might like to be lulled by some smiling chronicle of domestic bliss, some rural idyll, some cottar's Saturday night. If so, Omura is full of these things, and we are now at

the wrong house. But if, on the contrary, the sight of an oldish woman and a young girl, neither in any way remarkable to look at, but living alone together, should seem to provoke in us any curiosity at all, then we may rather disregard all those other lives.

These two are mother and daughter. Their name is Hara. The older woman is a widow, and she has survived two of her children. Even as a child, she had seen her own parents mauled by misfortune, but you would never guess all this from her face, manner and appearance—at least, not for some time. She is always cheerful, smiling and actually laughing, but after some time one realises that it is all put on. It is a mask. She conceives it to be her duty to present to the world a gentle smile, and nobody commends her for it. She is not really a very old woman, but she is old for her age, and is now practically bedridden. Her face shows marks of woe to a careful eye. As for her own eyes, they are kindly, but the rims are red, and in the winter when the wind is cold they water easily, and she looks exactly as if she is weeping, but of course she is really smiling all the time. Those tears must be only weather tears.

I won't harass the reader by describing her feelings at the death of her husband by violence; of one of her children, at a promising age, of a disgusting disease; and of another by a pure accident, which of course afterwards appeared to have been easily preventable. The village explained all this by the fact that the late Hara, stout-hearted, headstrong and boyish, had married her in defiance of the indications of the zodiac. In fact, by overruling his parents and defying the stars, he had been asking for trouble. To this theory the widow had always paid lip-service,

perhaps to save trouble, to take the line of least resistance, but naturally the yearning of a woman's heart, especially when combined with that of a man's, is stronger than the frown of an astrologer: the astrologer may reserve the right to say, "I told you so." So the difference between the fortunes of the Hara family and those of the rest of the villagers may at once, if you like, be ascribed to the fact that the Haras began wrong. If you take the wrong turning at first, you are likely to reach the wrong destination at last; and nobody in Omura had ever before been known to marry against the indications of the heavens. Not that anybody was harsh or callous. They were spontaneously and constantly kind, for most of them were somehow related to or connected with the family, whose two survivors could hardly have existed without some kind of support.

The daughter, Chiyé, was just seventeen, an ordinary country wench, a small, plain, healthy virgin, awkwardly bashful, with cheeks as round and hard and red as apples, no nose to speak of, and black wispy hair of the texture of horsehair. Not clever, but not a fool. And perhaps, like all young women, a problem. The mother could easily find a home, and people would take in the daughter too. Before long Chiyé might be married off. But her mother secretly cherished another plan. Her late husband had a married sister in Tokyo whom she had only once seen since her marriage. They had been familiar in childhood, and still sometimes wrote to each other.

This sister was still living. Her husband, an official, was said to be rather well-to-do. If only Chiyé could go to them! The smiling widow brooded, lying awake in the night and listening to the girl's heavy

regular breathing, and at last decided to write and make a suggestion to her sister-in-law. But before she could write, a letter came from Tokyo which happened to be a direct invitation for the girl to come.

People who have suffered a great deal sometimes suspect a sudden happiness: they think there is a catch in it somewhere. The widow, torn by a lifetime, mistrusted her own elation. She told the girl, who, at the thought of Tokyo, was too scared to speak.

"It is a piece of good luck," said her mother. "And we must make the most of it."

It was a piece of good luck, an extraordinary chance for the girl. It is not every day that a female bumpkin of Omura is offered a safe niche in the capital. But nearly everybody was dead against it. They said, in their cottage-wisdom, that it was madness for such a young girl to go to Tokyo alone.

"But she won't be alone," said the widow, "she'll be with her aunt."

"Everybody knows the dangers of such a great city. Even her aunt can't protect her. They say that there are foreigners in Tokyo who just go about spoiling virgins. Why, only the other day in the newspaper——and not only foreigners——"

"I'm sure she'll be safe with her aunt and uncle."

The widow was hopeful, and with the suffrage of a minority, wrote back her thanks and said the girl was coming. One or two people thought that this was as bad as the old story of Hara and the zodiac; and one or two said so, but not to the widow.

The village where nothing ever happens? Hara Chiyé was going to Tokyo! One early autumn morning a crowd of villagers could have been seen

standing on the platform of the station at the next village but one. The girl herself, to be chaperoned by the guard, who was an acquaintance of a distant connection, leaned out of the window, full of smiles, blushes and confusion. Her sensations since the receipt of her aunt's letter had been powerful, and corresponding to their outward manifestations. She was young and low-bred and showed what she felt. From one moment to another she had hardly known whether to feel joy at the excitement of the prospect and at the envy of her friends, or embarrassment and shame at this launching out, or dread at leaving the village, or sorrow at leaving her sick mother, from whom she had never been separated from a single day. The two predominant sensations in this upheaval were a mixture of bashfulness, sadness and homesickness, and also a vague anticipatory joy. She was by no means a pudding-head.

Now, at some chance remark, she hid the lower part of her face in her red cotton scarf, blushed to match it, blinked her bright black eyes, and with a small fat hand in a pink cotton glove put back a wayward wisp of horsehair from her forehead. Her mother hadn't been able to come and see her off, and as Chiyé stared at all the friendly valedictory faces in the station they suddenly seemed almost strange or hostile. She thought of her poor old mother and wondered when she should see her again, gave a loud sniff, and another, and very nearly burst into tears. She was saved by a piercing whistle, ten voices all speaking at once, ten rustic bodies all bowing like grass in a storm, hands, smiles, faces, farewells.

The train moved out of the station, and with a burning face and beating heart she sank on to the

seat, feeling that all eyes in the long carriage were on her (as, indeed, most of them were), and not daring, for several minutes, to glance up at the rack over her head, where a small basket, containing all her worldly possessions, and a string bag of fat persimmons were trembling a little at the vibration of the train.

II

She had been unable to form any definite ideas about her aunt and uncle, so that she was at first neither overjoyed nor disappointed. Everything was so new and strange. Her aunt was very kind, even effusive, and smiled and chattered a great deal. It was not at all like her mother's smile, and in spite of all this cheerfulness Chiyé liked her uncle much better, quite an ordinary, elderly man, who was seldom at home and hardly took any notice of her except to speak to her as if she was a servant. Perhaps that was why she liked him. Or perhaps she realised intuitively his ordinary heart about the same time (it was very soon) that she saw through her aunt's cheerfulness to an inner core of hardness, selfishness, cupidity and cunning. The fact that her uncle spoke to her as master to servant wasn't surprising, for it was practically as a servant that she worked, though of course she drew no wages, for the prosperity of her uncle was only an Omura legend, and even had he had money his wife would still have watched pounds as carefully as she watched pence. Her aunt, who already had two children, expected to give birth before very long to another. For this reason, she explained, she was particularly glad to have Chiyé with her. So Chiyé, whatever she might have looked forward to, became a drudge. The house was in a poor part of Tokyo, cold in winter, hot in summer,

dark, dusty, dirty and obscure. Few visitors came. Her aunt went often to the public bath-house and gossiped for hours at a time. Chiyé looked after the house, the children, the clothes and the shopping. Her aunt then took to sleeping in the daytime.

"I'm sorry you have so much work to do," she remarked once, with a radiant smile, "but, you see, my coming confinement——"

She talked a great deal about her coming confinement, until the expected event took on an excessive importance in Chiyé's imagination, and when at last the child was born, the girl was so obsessed with the significance of its arrival that, although her work immediately increased, she devoted all her spare thoughts and time to playing with it, looking at it, kneeling by it, talking to it. Chiyé was not unhappy, but her aunt was, for, like so many people, she wanted money and didn't know how to get it: her husband had lost some money unexpectedly and she herself also needed more, to say nothing of the children, now three in number.

Chiyé's mother now wrote much oftener to her sister-in-law as well as to her daughter. The widow said she hadn't been very well in the winter, but had picked up in the spring. She asked many questions and always expressed her hopes of seeing Chiyé again before long, though she must have known that such hopes were unlikely to be fulfilled. And Chiyé, when she had a moment to think, experienced pangs of longing to go back to Omura. But meanwhile her aunt thought of a plan. Chiyé had been just a year in Tokyo when her protector came to her one day and said:

"A friend of one of my friends knows a lady who

keeps an important high-class hotel, and this lady asked my friend's friend to ask her to ask me if I knew of any young girl who wants a situation, as a vacancy has just occurred on her staff which must be immediately filled. Of course I at once thought of you. It's a wonderful chance, and I've accepted it for you, and you're to go as soon as possible."

She paused significantly, as if waiting for gratitude, but Chiyé, whose heart was beating hurriedly, only stared at her with wide-open eyes.

'I'm sorry you have to leave us, but I think this is a real opening for you. And you can earn some money, which you'll be able to send to your mother——"

The girl thought that her aunt was rather over-eager, rather too ready with all this information. She felt a slight resentment that she hadn't sooner been told or consulted about it.

"But—" she said timidly, "but, Aunt, do you think it is all right—I mean is it quite safe—for me to——"

"Chiyé, I have already paid for you a premium."

"A premium?"

"Yes. There are so many girls who wish to get that place that at first we must pay some money for them to go in, then they work on trial for a month or two, then they get paid proper wages."

"But——"

"So it is an excellent situation."

"And you have paid——"

"It is not mine, but your uncle's generosity. Don't thank him, because you know it annoys him to be spoken to by a servant—well, by any girl, even about ordinary household things."

"And I must go soon?"

"Yes, it will be better. The sooner the better."

"But you do want me to go, Aunt?"

"No, no, of course not, but I'm thinking of your poor mother. It is time for you to try and send her something. You came to Tokyo to help to support her, you know, not to help me."

Chiyé hid her face in her sleeve. She sobbed once or twice. When she looked up, her aunt had gone out of the room. But one of the children had come in, and was standing in the doorway with the baby tied on to its back. Chiyé got up and ran to the baby, loosened it, lifted it up and embraced it. Whenever she just glanced at its eyes a thrill ran right down her spine.

"Where's your mother?" she asked the eldest child.

"She's gone to the bath-house."

Indeed, at this moment, a street away, her aunt was squatting in exceedingly hot water with three other ladies; the gold teeth of her smile gleamed radiantly through the cloudy steam, and the sound of her voice, flowing on continually in a stream of small-talk and home chat, mingled with the sound of the scalding hot water chortling out of a tap a yard from her nose, and helped to preserve for her the good name of a sociable and animated busybody.

Chiyé, although she was holding the baby in her arms, felt a faint but sickening sense of nameless apprehension, loneliness, helplessness. She was now to go among strangers! Not as a relation, but a servant. On trial. A premium. A real opening. Don't thank your uncle. The recent words of her aunt kept recurring in her mind, where every one of them had stuck. She was still full of hopes, but neither now

nor later was she capable of telling herself the real truth. She wasn't conscious enough. The real truth was that she didn't want to leave the baby, the true centre, had she only known it, of her life at her aunt's.

Less than week later she set out, accompanied by that aunt, and carrying a basket and bundle, for the hotel where she was to work. They rode in a tram, and the older woman, smiling affably, talked all the way.

The Kaméfuku, or Lucky Tortoise, Hotel is hard to find, for it is at the end of a blind alley within a maze of narrow streets which all look much alike and none of which leads anywhere in particular. This part of Hongo-ku is dingy and dirty. It has never been anything else, but in the years after the great earthquake it was at its worst. To reach the hotel, in fact, one has to go through slums. The final approach is narrow, dark and smelly; as cold as the grave from October to April, and for the rest of the year sultry but sunless. The front of the hotel, such as it is, faces north, and is screened by a number of tuberculous trees and by the blank wooden walls of some cramped houses opposite. The prevailing colour may be called an unclean slate—or battle-ship-grey. The alley-way, the houses, the trees are grey, the hotel is dead grey, and the lightless air is grey. The stinking water which runs, or fails to run, in the open drains at the side is dirty grey, the faces of the older inhabitants of this region are doughy grey, the past, present and future are muddy grey. And as Chiyé and her aunt entered the alley-way—the woman walking with some speed, assurance and determination, the girl lagging because of her load, her uncertainty and her short

legs—a cold, dank, dead air touched her, like the grey lick of a gigantic tongue, and she shivered.

It is characteristic of the Kaméfuku Hotel that its dark portal doesn't face the alley-way. Like so many things in Japan, it is round the corner. But let not the reader for one moment assume that because of the prevailing neutral tints these surroundings are therefore destitute of that local colour to which he has a right. Ah, no. Is this not the land of cherry blossoms, nay, of the Rising Sun? Of course it is. And of course it is time to rinse the brush and dip it in brighter hues. Far be it from me to look only on the dark side, far be it from me even to notice that there is a dark side—or at any rate let's turn the dark cloud inside out and discover what treasures it has up its sleeve.

It might be by now reasonably supposed that the Kaméfuku Hotel is only a resort of the indigent and obscure, of the mentally and physically grey, but this is not the case. It cannot be judged by its appearance. Chiyé and her aunt have only just reached the *genkan*. Let's at least wait until they get inside. There is another thing to take into account if one is trying to arrive at the true status of the house.

Although it is so unfortunate in its immediate surroundings, it is necessary to remember that this part of Tokyo is quite convenient and central. For instance, it is near the University, and some important schools, within easy reach of Kanda and Véno, and served by various means of communication. The hotel is only two minutes from the trams. Yet in spite of all these facilities, it also has the advantage of being comparatively quiet. Most of the people who stay there do not do so simply because

it is quiet and central, but also partly because of the other people who stay, or have stayed there. The hotel attracts, generally speaking, certain types of men. Chiyé will find them out for herself. She is already bowing at the entrance, blushing, palpitating, and by slipping out of her light wooden clogs on to the polished floor she stands also on the threshold of a new phase of her life.

III

SHE bows and blushes before the proprietress herself, who may conveniently be called Mrs. Kikuchi, a big woman for a Japanese, a masterful and calculating widow, whose portly stocky front, always covered with an apron that was clean the day before yesterday, serves as a pedestal (the contours of the back view being apparently much like those of the front, only apronless for a hard, square, puffy face. There is no reason to suppose that a Japanese landlady need be so very different from one in corresponding circumstances elsewhere. The Kaméfuku Hotel being in a slum conceals no tea-house tea-roses. Look at this heavy, costive face with the lustreless, dusty, drab hair drawn up and back on every side and screwed into a top-knot in the middle of the plateau above. Look at the shifty eyes; furtive, adaptable and quite unenthusiastic smile; and large, calculating, avaricious hands. This is Chiyé's mistress, and Chiyé accordingly touches the floor with her forehead.

The three women seat themselves round the firebox on the matted floor of a room just off the entrance, a room that may be called the office, for it contains a telephone and a broken gramophone, a calendar hangs on the wall, and in the corner a young man is seated doing accounts at a low desk littered with papers. He takes no notice at all of the women, except to glance with cold indifference at Chiyé. He

is the younger son of the proprietress. His elder brother is out. His elder brother is nearly always out.

In spite of her aunt's cheerfulness, and the apparently maternal benevolence of Mrs. Kikuchi, Chiyé feels uneasy, helpless, victimised and wants to weep. She is handed a cup of tea, and again blushes, muttering her thanks. But she is not so confused that she fails to notice underneath the formal mutual politeness of the two elder women some degree of intimacy and understanding. This surprises her, for she had supposed that they were not even acquainted, but she is far too innocent to suspect anything. . . .

Before saying good-bye to Mrs. Kikuchi, her aunt extracts a promise that Chiyé shall be allowed to come and see her from time to time, and then grinning and nodding, and bowing low four, five, six times, opens her oiled-paper umbrella, gathers her skirts closely with her bony left hand and steps out on her high clogs into the street. It has begun to rain.

The first few months that the girl spent in these new surroundings could not be called sensational, but nevertheless they were of singular importance to her, for she was now more cut off than she had ever been before from her relations and friends. If she had had much time to think and brood, no doubt Omura and her mother and the old and happy days (ah, they never seemed so happy at the time, but only when the traveller in the desert looks back to the leafy mountains does he understand what he has left) would have seemed very far away, far and near like a lover in a dream. But luckily she had to work hard, and work, though it may not be a cure,

is at times a useful drug. Then it must also be remembered that she was not, strictly speaking, a thoughtful or brooding person by nature, but ready enough to be at home where she found herself and to accept happiness without seeking it. Her thoughts, like everybody else's, came to her from her feelings. Her reason was the slave of her passions: the belly, as the Chinese long ago discovered, being the home of the soul.

Even when she was tired there were usually a few minutes before she slept, and she sometimes lay awake at three or four in the morning—it was at those times that she felt herself, all unwitting, in the grip of nameless powers, and the longings and cravings that stirred her then were long afterwards to translate themselves in the brain of that bright and active daylight virgin into regrets, hopes and desires. And then she might sigh or smile, for nobody had taught her that it is useless to dwell on the past except to profit by it, and that it is useless to expect anything of the future.

She slept in a room with four other maids, and all five of them snored. It was the duty of each to look after a particular section of the untidy, rambling, scrambling building; all made, or nearly all, of wood and glass and paper; full of twists and turns and ups and downs; which sometimes broke out, as in the façade, into a "foreign" aspect, and from whose windows one always caught sight of other windows or sunny corners of the roof. The girls also had to help with washing, washing-up and other activities. They were maids-of-all-work, and they all had to work unceasingly, though they occasionally had time off, when they could attend to their own

clothes: but somehow if they ever settled down to talk or to read or write letters the telephone was sure to ring. The telephone in that room was apt to ring at any time, and the receiver and bell, hanging there black and shining, were like a perpetual warning, always on the verge of breaking silence.

"*Moshimoshi!* Hullo!"

And at the other end the voice of the younger son of Mrs. Kikuchi (for the elder one was nearly always out) could be heard, hard, insolent and peremptory. The young man never smiled. In the daytime he sat in the office and bullied the maids; at night he sat in the office listening to the wireless, talking to his mother or his friends, and occasionally bullying the maids over the telephone. He was one of those men who seem to derive sexual satisfaction from insulting female dependents. Until he married, six years later, this vocal sadism was almost his sole occupation.

Chiyé soon became friendly with a maid called Tsuya, a country girl who had been in Tokyo about six months longer than herself, but the others, for one reason and another, she didn't like so much. One was rather old, one was rather cattish, one was rather dull, but still she got on with them, for they all had their good moments, and she herself was ready enough to get on with anybody at all times. In spite of her awkwardness she was gentle and unselfish. The vague feeling (most of her feelings were vague) of loneliness and nostalgia was not quickly got rid of. She didn't only think of old village days and miss her mother. Now she also missed the house and children she had just left, the family and surroundings of her aunt, and even that gossiping,

scheming woman herself. Most of all she missed the baby she had looked after.

She had been less than a month in the place when she asked leave to go and see her aunt. Mrs. Kikuchi, with maternal condescension, readily agreed. Chiyé put her old red scarf round her neck, found her aunt all smiles, and spent a lot of time playing with the baby. The second time she went her aunt was out. And when she wanted to go a third time, Mrs. Kikuchi refused without giving any reason. Chiyé said nothing, but believing that during the next few days she noticed less benevolence in the manner of her mistress, she decided to discuss, or rather suddenly began to discuss the matter with her friend Tsuya in the servant's bedroom. It was a room in which the characters and idiosyncrasies of all the inmates, visitors and connections of the hotel were sooner or later thoroughly and repeatedly discussed and compared. It was a temple of gossip, hearsay and invention, in which curiosity—an escape from dullness—was more conspicuous than malice—an escape from suffering.

The two girls chanced to be alone. Tsuya began by asking under exactly what circumstances Chiyé had come to work here. Tsuya looked so simple, but behind her sad, mild eyes was a quick brain, and by asking this question she had at once gone to the heart of the matter. Chiyé told the story of the "opening" and the "premium," and Tsuya kept on answering shortly, quite non-committal:

"Is that so? So?"

And then the telephone rang. It may easily be imagined who was at the other end. The conversation stopped.

Four days later they were on their way to the bath-house in the next street, when Tsuya came out with a piece of information. Quite by chance she had overheard that morning, in her wing of the house, part of a conversation between Mrs. Kikuchi and an elderly woman who was visiting somebody in the hotel. They had at first been talking about Chiyé's aunt, and it was this which had caught her attention. Then had come a reference to Chiyé herself. Somebody had said: "And that was what you paid?" The answer was not clear. Then:

"The girl knows?"

"Not yet," in Mrs. Kikuchi's voice. "I shall explain to her when it is necessary."

From these and other somewhat scrappy data Tsuya, who already knew something of Chiyé's aunt, had constructed a theory.

Chiyé began to tremble.

"I believe," said Tsuya, "that your aunt sold you to this hotel."

"What?"

"Mrs. Kikuchi has certainly paid some money to your aunt. That means she has bought you. You can't escape. You're bound, just like a girl in a licensed house."

"It's impossible," said Chiyé, in the teeth of the facts. "My aunt said——"

"And you believed her! Why should she pay a premium for you? Is she so rich? Does she love you so much?"

"She is my father's sister."

"And she has taken advantage of that to enrich herself. It's well known that she's fond of money."

"Oh, but I can't believe it——"

IV

GRADUALLY, however, she forced herself to believe it. Her work seemed to increase, she hardly dared to look at her mistress, she could think of nothing else. . . . But surely she would get wages? She would be able to send something to her mother? Should she write to her mother and try and confirm the truth? No, she would be sure first. Without consulting Tsuya, she decided to ask permission once more to go and see her aunt. After hesitating for a day or two, she timidly approached Mrs. Kikuchi, feeling sure that the older woman could read her thoughts plainly.

"Why do you want to go?" said Mrs. Kikuchi. Chiyé thought she had an odd, shrewd expression.

"Only—only for a visit," she faltered.

"Ah, so?" This was said in a strange way. "Then you may go. But you must be back at six."

She found her aunt at home, very kind and cheerful. She couldn't believe——and yet she must ask. After a time she became confused and agitated.

"What's the matter, dear? Aren't you feeling well?"

"I'm quite well, thank you," she said slowly.

She realised that she simply couldn't bring herself to ask. She blushed, wondered if it was time to go back yet, and tried to forget herself by holding the baby. When she went away, her aunt, beaming, and

smirking, gave her some clothes for a present. Chiyé was so surprised at this unexpected and unusual generosity that she thanked her aunt profusely—and found herself already on the way back. She told the whole story to Tsuya.

"And so you didn't ask her after all?"

"Oh, I *couldn't.*"

"Well, it's certainly true."

Her aunt wrote to her occasionally, but Chiyé always felt disagreeable now when she read these postcards. She tried to forget that she was a prisoner. She tried to forget her aunt, and though she longed sometimes to go and see her again, she didn't ask for leave.

Now what was, in fact, the actual truth of her coming here? Her aunt, in exchange for the "loan" of a considerable sum of money, had undertaken to surrender Chiyé, body and soul, to the hotel, on condition that the pledge could at any time be redeemed for an equal payment. It is hardly necessary to add that should the aunt ever by some extraordinary stroke of fortune come into any money she would, as a good mother, use it for the education of her children or some other worthy purpose. Mrs. Kikuchi was quite satisfied with her bargain—such a convenient form of contract. And Chiyé began slowly and painfully to learn by her own experience the universal truth that slavery always and everywhere survives its abolition.

What a life! And yet the girl had been brought up to nothing much easier. If she suffered now, it was not because she had come down in the world. On the contrary, she had arrived in Tokyo; and here she was. Chiyé may at times have longed to be else-

where: who doesn't? But if she now no longer enjoyed the peace of Omura, if she was now separated from her mother and the scenes and friends of her childhood, she lived at any rate in Tokyo, a circumstance for which she knew many of those same friends envied her, and she was actually philosophical enough to console herself with this thought. Often, hurrying alone down an empty corridor to answer the telephone call of a new arrival, she would feel a pleasurable qualm of delightful anticipation. Her life contained elements of surprise which prevented it from being dull. A scrap of gossip in the maid's room would set her ears a-tingle and furnish her for days with food for speculation. Rumours, thoughts and dreams; occasional familiarities from one of the lodgers; the whole stress of character and circumstance made for variety.

She toiled, but she wasn't bored. Tsuya was her constant confidante. She became slightly thinner and paler but remained perfectly healthy. Such physical changes were for the better. She had never been ugly, and was now, she hoped—peeping in somebody else's mirror while she paused in dusting a room—she told herself that she was now less plain than she had been.

She began to take an interest in the newspapers, of which her somewhat elementary education allowed her to read a great part. Curiosity was born in her, and brought with it the usual results, especially ambition. She was able to formulate in her mind a definite wish to marry and bear a child. She wanted a home, a husband, a lover, an intrigue, a romance, a double suicide, a concrete hope to live for—anything she could get.

She read in the newspapers about the careers of

exceptional girls, and saw no reason why she shouldn't also be an exceptional girl. She might become a waitress in a café or restaurant; or an actress or film actress—she was not quite clear about the difference, if any, between these. She might learn some musical instrument, flower arrangement or needlework, and earn money by giving lessons. Two girls from a high school were reported to have lately joined a ship for America as stewardesses—unheard-of originality! but she might do the same. She might become a woman painter or novelist. One of the other maids, indeed, had this last ambition, and had already written from memory a fragment of her experiences at a primary school. Fame and fortune await successful women writers. . . .

Perhaps this cultural trend in her dreams (rather than thoughts) was partly caused by some of the persons she had to wait on. The Kaméfuku Hotel has long been a resort of some of the lesser men of letters, and usually houses some sort of a novelist, a brace of poets and other intelligentsia not usually of the most popular or successful, nor perhaps of the most refined. Hidden away round so many corners, it is a convenient periodical retreat from wives and families, friends, creditors or the daily task. Even a best-seller may appear there for a week-end, not necessarily unaccompanied.

When such a person turned up, the house was at once in a flutter. The proprietress and her younger son were excessively obsequious, the bath steamed hotter, the cook worked harder, the maids pattered up and down the smooth bare floors of the passages. Once a well-known film actor, tall, strong and florid, arrived at dusk on a motor bicycle and ordered every-

body about, which they all enjoyed, fairly tumbling over one another to oblige him. The same thing occurred with a retired wrestler. And just at present the debauched son of an enormously rich factory-owner in the country was staying on the first floor, a lout who came to Tokyo at least twice a year, and always had the same room. He was so free of promiscuous tips and caresses, and was considered such an important visitor, besides being flushed with lust and coarse of speech, that the maids were always in and out of his room, especially in. The stories Chiyé heard of this rake naturally excited her imagination, and she wished in vain, half repelled and half fascinated, to get a chance of attending him, but her work lay elsewhere.

Tsuya related anecdotes of a lady with two husbands, a divorcee; of an eccentric young foreigner in a bleak back room whose name was Puruma and who was visited by a young woman in dark clothes who always covered her mouth with her sleeve and looked melancholy, but had a silvery laugh when with him; and of an Indian, a gentle and handsome man who had had to leave the country because he was blackmailed. It appeared that a young Japanese girl, of more beauty than character, living in a neighbouring street, had led him on by an affected appearance of innocence, and that then her mother, a wicked old duenna, had deliberately surprised them at a prearranged signal. . . . Chiyé's mind was prepared by the fragments of many local dramas for anything to happen.

V

HER peculiar care was a corridor with three rooms on one side and five on the other. Of these eight rooms one, small and cold and facing north, was empty. The inhabitants of the other seven were not, with two or three exceptions, of surpassing interest to her. One was an old man, an odd recluse, who lived frugally, but was said to be very rich. He has no special part in this story, but that Chiyé rather liked him and attended him many times daily. He never rose before noon, only ate one light meal during the day, read meticulously three newspapers, went out every evening, and dressed in very good dark brown silk kimono. He smoked vile stinking cigarettes, but nobody noticed that they were vile and stinking. His chief peculiarity was a completely bald head, quite round and smooth. He was sufficiently proud of this dome to wash it daily with care, and Chiyé had the duty of carrying to him at the bath a saucerful of white-of-egg, with which the old gentleman polished his glossy cranium for three or four minutes until it shone like red lacquer.

In the next room to him lived a young man with long hair who worked in an office. The long hair showed that he was musical, but the only sounds that ever came from his room were those of expectoration. However, he went out sometimes in the evening, looking very serious, and carrying with great

care an *empty* violin case. It was Chiyé who found this out, and she accordingly held him in some contempt. Later on, she saw a large volume of translations from Karl Marx lying on his table: its pages long remained uncut.

"Why do you buy such a book," she asked, "if you don't mean to read it?"

He answered with a surprising frankness, so that afterwards she found it easy to forgive him for being an intellectual snob.

"Some of my friends asked me if I was a Marx-boy,[1] and of course I had to answer yes. One must be in the fashion, one can't be thought an ignoramus, so, as everybody is reading Marx now, I bought this book."

Next door to this youth lived a married couple, who were quite contented, and therefore of no distinction whatsoever. Beyond them, in a smaller room, were two university students in whom Chiyé took a special interest. They teased her in a friendly, off-hand way, and she became quite attached to them. Most of their time was spent in playing baseball or talking or reading about it, but when the time for examinations was getting near they sat up all night with wet towels on their heads, back to back, over law text book. Neither of them ever passed an examination. Sometimes when they were out Chiyé would pause in her sweeping and finger their clothes and other belongings. It gave her an inexplicable thrill just to touch their baseball gloves and bats.

The only thing she regretted was that they never attempted to make love to her. They even teased her about her appearance.

Tsuya, although better-looking, seemed little

[1] *Marukusu-boi.*

luckier. She told Chiyé about a young man on the third floor who was the son of a general and quite rich, but never played baseball. He was always reading or writing, but he went out a great deal, for he gave lectures nearly every day in a high school and a university. He was lively and good looking, but he never had letters from women, and never took much notice of Tsuya, though he was quite polite to her. It was evident that she admired him very much, and took pains to please him. At one time she had never stopped talking to Chiyé about Minami —for that was his name—but lately she said little about him. No doubt she was disappointed because he practically ignored her.

Chiyé herself had once been sent up to his room on some errand, and had found him sitting on the matted floor before his low desk, which was littered with books and papers and illuminated by a standard lamp with a red shade. His sleeves were turned up, and he was busily writing. She had approached him timidly, for she knew that he was translating from a foreign language the history of the world: advertisements of the first and second parts had already appeared in the newspapers. When he looked up and spoke to her she didn't think he was so handsome as one of her baseball students, but she couldn't help liking the manly charm and vivacity of his open face. His eyes were bright and intelligent, his colour good and his voice clear, but it was impossible not to notice that his mouth was a little drawn, that it couldn't escape, even when he smiled, a stigma of sadness. It was as if, in his face, there was a war between the forces of heart and head: the upper part of the face, even the bright smile, seemed to

show the power and alertness of intellect and will, but the resigned mouth, and even sometimes the eyes, showed the fatally unconquerable power of emotion. Of all this, though, she only got a vague impression.

She would catch a glimpse of Minami in the corridors or at the door of the bathroom, or run into him just as he was going out, and she studied him from afar. Hearing by chance that his nickname among his students was Vitamin, she could see that the name suited him well, for he was restlessly eager in all his doings. Had she only known, he was in the throes of reason against romance, will against wish, that battle in which we are all engaged for life. Chiyé almost envied her she-friend the privilege of waiting on this serious and lively young man, but whenever she tried to talk about Minami, Tsuya made little response, so she gave it up.

An occasional letter from her mother, who seemed comfortably settled, would for several days send her thoughts back to Omura. Her mother told her to keep any money she might earn, a noble sacrifice on the part of that weak old woman in a country where children are bound to make noble sacrifices for their parents without expecting any gratitude. However, except for a little pocket-money, Chiyé had as yet had nothing from Mrs. Kikuchi, nor was she likely to get much out of that lady, who might fairly accurately be called her purchaser.

It has been said that in the care of Chiyé there was a small empty room facing north, but although it faced north it afforded only a very small glimpse of the northern sky. Chiyé sometimes slipped in

there at the quietest part of the afternoon, and would stand a minute or two gazing up above the cold dark roofs into that serene and sunny immensity against which was printed a slender column of iron, banded with scarlet and black, the chimney of a bath-house, out of the top of which poured unceasingly a creamy and sulphurous plume of smoke, whose direction silently altered with the wind. But her attention would usually be attracted by giggling and singing quite near at hand, and she could look down at a row of windows only a few yards away, in deep shadow, and partly screened, whence the sound proceeded. That gloomy wooden barrack opposite was the dormitory of a girls' school, and this side of it so nearly touched one end of the Kaméfuku Hotel that it seemed that between them no ray of the sun ever shone. At night, though, an oblique segment of a moonray, cut by the angles of roofs, might travel into the canyon between the two buildings, and that dazzling ligh. might reveal the motionless head and shoulders of a virgin, looking up at the purity of the night, and dreaming, just as if she was asleep.

Passing down her corridor one afternoon Chiyé noticed that the door of this room was open, and hearing voices, looked in. Her two baseball students were at the window, one shaking with laughter, and the other leaning out and calling to somebody. She hurried to another room where she could look out and see what was going on. They were talking familiarly to two schoolgirls at the opposite window. The girls were in paroxysms of giggling: one had her hair down and her hand over her mouth; the other, a beauty, was tying something to a long bam-

boo pole—such as is used for hanging out washing—the other end of which was held by one of the students. It was a letter.

"Oi," cried one of the students, "be careful!"

And the girls both doubled themselves up with excitement, blushing and shaking with laughter, their faces half covered by their silken sleeves.

So that was why the students ignored her! They were in touch with that lovely creature over the way. It wasn't jealousy that Chiyé felt, but rather disappointment, a sudden sickening sense of the futility of hope. She remembered how they always teased her—but she didn't want to be teased, she wanted to be loved. She told the story to Tsuya, who showed great interest in it, but could only offer by way of consolation the news that the students were due to leave soon (for they had just failed again in their last examination), and then, she suggested, perhaps somebody more promising would take their place. She counselled hope, and Chiyé sighed, feeling lonely. Somehow she couldn't be on quite such intimate terms with Tsuya at present: it was just as if something had come between them, though of course, she assured herself, there was nothing that could possibly have done so.

VI

As it was a long time since she had been to see her aunt and her baby cousin, Chiyé asked leave to go. Mrs. Kikuchi, as usual, smiled slyly on her large drab face. It was impossible for Chiyé to gauge at all what the proprietress was thinking or how much she was hiding, for that inscrutable expression might conceal everything or nothing. Mrs. Kikuchi was a cunning woman, and like all cunning people she couldn't hide her tricks permanently from anybody really watchful: Chiyé, however, was sufficiently pure in heart to be gullible. Mrs. Kikuchi now gave her gracious assent, as if she had nothing at all up her sleeve.

An hour later Chiyé might have been seen walking quickly on her clogs down a narrow street in that dingy and overcrowded quarter with which she was so familiar, but she suddenly paused a moment, as if in surprise, for she had noticed that the shutters on the street side of her aunt's house had been drawn across the windows. This was odd. Chiyé hurried to the entrance. It was locked. She went round to the back. The kitchen door was also locked, and all the windows were shuttered. It was obvious that the family were away. Impossible! In a dustbin at the kitchen door there were some orange skins that looked quite fresh. Hoping against hope, and glancing up sideways, Chiyé rattled the door. There was no answer. For a moment she could hardly

breathe, as if she had been suddenly immersed in cold water.

Then she remembered a friend of her aunt's was living next door who would tell her why the family were absent; but her call was now answered by somebody she didn t know. She asked for the former neighbour by name.

"No, I'm sorry, she doesn't live here now, but went away some months ago."

"Then, I beg your pardon, but can you tell me where my aunt is at present?"

"Your aunt?"

Chiyé explained. The neighbour frowned.

"The house is to let," she said majestically, "for the family have gone into the country for good. They left yesterday, and most of the furniture went last week."

"Into the country!"

"I don't know the address, I'm sorry."

As Chiyé came out, she saw a man in a fur cap and a long overcoat with a frayed velvet collar standing in front of the old house. He had taken a large piece of paper out of an imitation leather dispatch case, and was pasting it obliquely on to the outside wall. It bore the words *To Let.*

She plucked up courage to ask him for her aunt's address. He looked at her with a broad smile, for he was a cheerful man. He was rather proud of his fur cap. When he spoke, the words simply poured out of his mouth. Chiyé smiled politely, and at last gathered definitely that her aunt had left Tokyo and was not coming back. He didn't know the address, but no doubt she could get it from the landlord, who was away at present, having gone to visit his native

place in the prefecture of N——, as his wife's nephew was about to marry, etc.

Chiyé thanked him, bowed and started back for the hotel. On the way she sat very upright in the tram, with a flushed face, and staring at her knees.

Mrs. Kikuchi affected surprise at the result of this expedition, and promised to make enquiries. And late in the evening, after her work was done. Chiyé sat down and wrote to her mother for information—she, at any rate, must have been told, and would explain. Then at last she confided it all to Tsuya, who was very sympathetic, but couldn't help reflecting on the cunning of the aunt and the proprietress, whom she felt convinced were in league; and who told Chiyé yet once more that she had been sold by one to the other. Chiyé wept.

During the next few days she suffered from headaches. It was the end of the summer, and the change in the season, together with thoughts of what she couldn't help regarding now as her unfortunate situation, tended to produce in her a disturbed state of mind. September is the May of autumn, says an old poet; and it is true that in the fall of the year we may be liable to feel a restlessness akin to that we felt in the spring. Just as a person in the autumn of life makes a sudden final spurt, so we may feel in us again, when the heat goes and the sky becomes serene and clear, other clouds of heat, a precious madness and creative longing. And the less we know about it the more we are at its mercy, yet even the very wise have to obey it, just as they are forced always to do things which they fondly suppose they themselves have originated, planned or approved.

Chiyé, with her hand to her forehead, decided to

go to a fortune-teller. She made this decision without consulting anybody: it was unusual for her to be so independent, but adversity instils desperation, and desperate people are apt to act for themselves. Besides, she who was now going to consult the zodiac, no doubt had in her something of her father's wilfulness, the man who had defied the zodiac. Having, as a child, heard often enough of her head-strong father's misfortunes, she had every excuse for being superstitious. And so the generations vary: the children run away from the mistakes of the parents, but they run on pretty much the same sort of legs.

Mrs. Kikuchi felt she could safely let Chiyé out on a long tether now and then—if all the windows and doors are locked, the canary may certainly be let out of its cage for half an hour and given the freedom of the room—by analogy, one conquers by yielding—so with her craftiest smile she gave the girl an afternoon off for "shopping," and asked no questions. Chiyé hadn't the slightest intention of shopping—which she would have liked very much—for she had only just enough money to pay for what she wanted, and a bit over.

VII

She went first to Véno, and then, feeling extraordinarily venturesome and reckless, got into the new underground railway just opened between that place and Asakusa. It was a wonderful experience, for while she was thinking what she would say to Tsuya when she got back, she found the train had already got to the other end.

She made straight for the fortune-teller's booths near the great temple of Kwannon (goddess of Mercy, Pity, Peace), for she had made a mental note of them on a visit to Asakusa (how long ago it seemed!) with her aunt and the children. She hadn't dared to ask or suggest anything at the time—and now here she was! First she climbed up the temple steps, where before that gigantic and cavernous portal she stood a moment in a group of worshippers. Under that overhanging cliff of carved scarlet wood she clapped her palms together softly, twice, to draw the attention of heaven; bowed her head; and asked for nothing but help. On her way down the steps she noticed a crowd of people gathered in an attentive ring about fifty yards away on the right, within the great compound, under a vast gingko tree whose leaves would soon turn pure yellow, and as she had plenty of time determined to go and see what they were so interested in. Flocks of fat doves rose and fell, flapped, strutted and cooed. Some were on the

ground just before her feet. So tame! She held out her hand and made a small sympathetic noise, but the doves, sleek and iridescent, turned their backs to her because she had nothing to give them. But she was luckier when she reached the crowd, for she arrived just as some others, exclaiming with valedictory astonishment, were disembroiling themselves, so, slipping in, she got their good place.

In a round space three Chinese jugglers were performing, with the assistance of a Korean who spent all his time packing and unpacking, and seemed oblivious of everything esle. The eldest Chinese was stout, middle-aged and wheezy, and his buffooneries were done with such an air of boredom that they were quite funny. Another was a boy. But the chief actor was a man of about thirty-five, who, like the others, was dressed entirely in black silk brocade, fitting tightly above the waist and ending in a loose divided skirt. He never kept still for a moment, and so held closely the attention of the spectators. At present he was blowing clouds of fire very rapidly out of his mouth and darting backwards and forwards to keep the air rushing in and out, while his associates kept up a continual patter in excellent Japanese. A moment later he was standing still, with his delicate hands on his hips, and the older man was pulling yards and yards of parti-coloured paper ribbons out of the now fireless mouth, with which, it seemed, all his tricks were done.

Chiyé looked at him carefully. His skin was redder than that of a Japanese, his hair was cut short and he looked animated and perfectly healthy. The eyes were small and rather flat, lidless, bluish underneath and with a metallic sparkle that seemed not

quite natural. The cheeks were flushed, but perhaps that was their usual state. The nose had no bridge, and would have been effeminate had it not ended in a pair of widely-gaping nostrils. But it was the mouth that made his living, and it was the mouth that was remarkable, for in repose it was shapely, but showed itself capable of expansion and distortion. The lips were thick and red, and about them, even when fixed in some grotesque position, lingered a smile in which there was neither cruelty, contempt nor humanity, but some other quality which had hints of these and yet seemed not to possess them.

Their owner now, for a change, occupied himself with some sleight of hand, while the boy and the Korean took out a basket from the bag on the ground. Then he went over to them and the other side, where he couldn't be seen so easily, and Chiyé turned her head to look at some girls among the spectators near her. Suddenly a loud murmur began to travel round the crowd, the girls gave a little scream and Chiyé could see the same actor coming round the ring. He seemed to be holding his hands before his face—now he paused right in front of her——

In his hands he was holding firmly the fore part of a shining black snake, whose little winking head curved alertly on its neck. Its tiny, slender body passed into his mouth, and was loosely held between his moist, caressing lips about which, as in his eyes, there was now some trace of contempt at the fascinated, gaping horror of the crowd. The long, smooth, tapering tail of the snake protruded several inches from his left nostril, where it flickered and twitched lithely and obscenely. . . .

Somebody exclaimed aloud. Chiyé, panic-stricken,

forced her way out of the crowd, tore her sleeve in doing it, ran in and out among the people until she could no longer hear those gasps of incredulity, could no longer see—— She shut her eyes, but the sight that had so powerfully caught her imagination was already burnt into her memory. She tried for days to escape it, to forget it, to hide herself from it, but always that face, that mouth, would pursue—an image of pure evil.

She now made her way over to the fortune-tellers' booths, but she was trembling, and had to stand outside for several minutes. She felt hysterical: the excitement of what she had just seen, the prospective excitement of whatever she was just going to hear, were too much for her.

The fortune-teller before whom she at last found herself was an old man with a keen eye, which he never removed from her face except to watch some abracadabra he was arranging all the time with his hands. He condescended to receive from her in advance the sum of two *yen* and fifty *sen,* in return for which he told her a lot of astrological claptrap which she couldn't understand at all, but said clearly enough that if she worked hard her life would not be a failure, that she was not destined to return to her native place this year, that she must beware of a man with a scar on his right forearm, that her character prevented her from seeing the bad intentions of others because she lacked intuition, and finally that if she followed his advice she might live long. . . . But he had said nothing about marriage. She didn't dare to ask him, but blushed vermilion, for his eye was fixed on her, and she was afraid he could read her thoughts.

"... and about marriage," he said, and paused.

She waited, expectant, red, breathless.

He pronounced a long astrological sentence.

"But—but I don't understand," she said anxiously.

"You will when the time comes," he said cryptically.

How she longed to put another two *yen* and fifty *sen* into his hand! But her money was nearly finished. Suddenly she had an idea, and blurted out:

"And shall I have a baby?"

The seer narrowed his eyes.

"I see no reason why you shouldn't," he said emphatically, and looking her up and down.

How delighted she was at this last piece of honourable condensation! What a marvellous prophet! When she left him she bowed as to a prince of philosophers, a celestial sage; and then, as it was late, the servant hurried home to the hotel.

VIII

Two days later she received a letter. It was her mother's answer to the enquiry about the whereabouts of her aunt. Yes, her mother knew, but at first couldn't understand why Chiyé hadn't been told that her aunt's husband had been transferred permanently to Nagoya, and that the whole family were to be there for good. However, word had since come from her aunt that the removal had been so unexpected and hurried that there had been no chance to say good-bye to Chiyé, who was now fortunately safe in the care of her kind friend Mrs. Kikuchi, working well and quite happy, and who would no doubt later be able to pay a visit to Nagoya, etc. Chiyé's mother exhorted her to work hard and be a good girl and then one day she would be able to come back to Omura and see her loving parent. Her dear mother!

Chiyé showed this letter to Tsuya, who was praising the mother and once more abusing the aunt, who had no excuse for going away, she said, without saying good-bye to her ward—when the telephone bell rang, and Chiyé was ordered to present herself immediately at the office. She hurried downstairs, and when she got there, the second son of Mrs. Kikuchi (the eldest was out) kept her waiting a few minutes and then threw her a telegram, saying insolently that it had come the day before, and that she was a fool for not having yet removed it. A telegram?

Chiyé rushed upstairs again to share it with Tsuya, who was just hurrying down.

"A telegram?" said Tsuya. "All right, I'll be back before long, but Mr. Minami has just rung his bell, and I may be delayed——"

Chiyé carried the telegram to the light and opened it. It was from Omura. She read it through slowly three times and then stared at it. Her mother was dead.

The telephone began ringing again and again. . . .

The effects of this news on her mind are better imagined than described, for she was stupefied by it. Whether she was stunned by the blow, whether she was one hardened or insensible to adversity, or whether she was able to put a stoic face on her troubles, it is certain that no ordinary observer could have judged from her appearance. She stood in the middle of the room with the telegram in her hand, and looked out of the window at a sunny patch of roof where on a wooden platform some blue and white clothes were waving in the wind: they had been freshly washed, and there was hardly a cloud in the sky.

All this time the telephone was ringing wildly, and Mrs. Kikuchi, who happened then to be on the same floor, came in to answer it. What was her amazement to see one of the servants actually in the room and ignoring the call! The stout old woman was not quick in her movements, but she was not slow in her understanding, and by the time she had taken the telegram from Chiyé and read it, the bell had stopped ringing. She said nothing and went out.

She would certainly have been on the verge of feeling sorry for the girl had not a doubt at once

attacked her as to whether her own proprietary rights were not now perhaps in danger. Possibly some relation of the girl might wish her to return to her native village. Mrs. Kikuchi was not a callous woman, but she was a woman of business; she had two sons and a hotel, and she made up her mind to write to Chiyé's aunt and find out how the land lay.

Chiyé's grief was real, and her mind was much occupied, as people's minds often are at such times, in recalling and reconstructing early memories and precious hours and episodes. As her mind got into this habit of retracing forgotten paths it would often come, at odd and unexpected moments, upon some vivid situation whose very existence it seemed to have forgotten, and she was able to escape, to lose herself, to drug herself out of the present into a dream picture whose revival was more poignant than novelty.

These mental conditions were followed, as they often are, by a vague, a very vague craving to express them, and Chiyé, whom a kind of natural modesty never left, so that her tongue was not always willing to utter aloud the thoughts that arose in her—even supposing it could express them—now half wished to write with ink her heart's tears for her kindest and dearest friend and protector, her dead mother. It was a half-wish, and she was less than half-educated, and her character was only half-developed. It went the way of all half-wishes, and nothing was done.

To her friend and fellow-servant she told something of her feelings, and honest Tsuya was as usual a real prop. Tsuya could only console her with hazy hopes, but she meant well, and her sympathy was precious as far as it went—as far as it went, because the sympathies of Tsuya were now deeply involved

with Minami, translator of the history of the world. What was more, Minami returned them.

The situation thus produced was piquant, to say the least, and the confidences Tsuya chose to make were the first influences that began to stir Chiyé out of her trance of memory, which nothing in her daily round had been able to do, although quite a time had elapsed since the receipt of the wire. Tsuya didn't say much, but what she did say was pointed, and it was quite clear that between her and Minami a feeling of a true and noble intensity had come to exist. But how could it exist? Tsuya was a housemaid and Minami the son of an officer of high rank in the army. They were far too serious for there to be any question of a temporary liaison, and it seemed that things had already gone so far as a tacit admission that marriage alone would be satisfactory. Up to this Chiyé felt sure of her ground, and beyond it she feared to tread. The face of her friend was radiant and resigned, like that of one who endures in the knowledge of a glorious and speedy relief.

Meanwhile Chiyé was a little distracted by various changes in the house. Her baseball-playing students suddenly left, and a gentleman was due to come, who was said to have some connection with the stage. The flutter below stairs was quite noticeable. It was variously asserted that he was a producer of films, a playwright, an actor, rich, poor, old, young and many other things. One would have hoped him to be, at the very least, youngish, dashing and prosperous. Was he married? Well, either a widower or divorcee, it wasn't quite clear which.

He arrived late one afternoon in February, got out of a taxi, and was shown straight to his room by

the proprietress herself, who seemed not only to have been expecting him but also to be acquainted with him. They went upstairs, he laughing shortly and abruptly and she wheezing with unctuous politeness.

Chiyé had the duty of helping him to change his clothes, of showing him to the bath, of bringing his supper and making his bed. She was as dry as she could be in her manner, for Jin (that was his name) spoke to her from the first with a careless and contemptuous familiarity she distrusted. Whenever she looked at him he could see that she feared him, and this gave him a pleasurable thrill of anticipation.

Jin was a man of thirty-nine, lean and sinewy, with hairy hands, a swarthy face, mauve lips and white projecting teeth which always seemed to be grinning. His eyes were untrustworthy. He didn't appear to work for a living, but always had money. He wore sometimes Japanese and sometimes foreign clothes, undoubtedly had some connection both with theatre and cinema, and was reported by Mrs. Kikuchi to be well known as a tennis-player. After he came he went out a great deal, but in spite of this Chiyé soon got to know and like him better. He was fond of a joke, and would scold her about some trifle until she apologised, and then laugh at her. This made her blush, and he enjoyed making her blush. Once or twice he pinched her arm, and once he asked her if she had ever been kissed.

"Chiyé," said Mrs. Kikuchi, "please be very polite and obedient to that gentleman, for he is related to me."

She somehow couldn't feel angry with him, but didn't want his attentions, even though they might only be playful. She talked about him to Tsuya,

saying that she must have misjudged him at first. Tsuya answered rather absently, saying that he seemed quite a sincere gentleman.

And then an unexpected thing happened: Minami left the hotel.

"What'll you do now?" said Chiyé.

"I don't know," said Tsuya. "But I'm also going away for a time."

"What! With him?"

"No, no, of course not. My father is ill, and I have to go home for a few days."

Two days later she went, and until she came back Chiyé had a lot of extra work. Until she came back? She never came back.

IX

THE story all came out a week later. All the newspapers were full of it, the hotel was buzzing with it and waves of excitement washed through every heart. It was briefly this:

Minami had become infatuated with Tsuya, and had decided to marry her. He accordingly went to his father, General Minami Shigéo, to get permission, which was sharply and finally refused. He was told that he must be out of his senses to imagine that he could marry a housemaid, and was ordered to leave the Kaméfuku Hotel. The young man had submitted with a good grace to his father's anger, and asked for a few days' delay, which was granted. The father then repented of his anger and spoke kindly, but Minami had already made up his mind to ask Tsuya to elope with him. Tsuya wasn't the girl to say no. Minami then addressed to his father a letter which he asked a friend to deliver after another week: he said nothing of its contents.

Next he met Tsuya by appointment. She was dressed in her best clothes, and they went to the station and took tickets to one of the smaller lakes near the bottom of Mount Fuji. The train was overheated, as the season was hardly yet early spring, and the outside air was bitterly cold. They had nothing with them but the clothes they stood up in. Minami, however, carried some money. Late at night they

arrived by motor at a small hotel near Lake Kawaguchi. Their appearance excited the curiosity, if not the suspicion of the proprietor. In the first place it was an odd time for visitors. There was a lot of snow on the ground, the hotel was empty and there was absolutely nothing to do. Then this couple had brought no luggage. Madame Minami? She hardly seemed his social equal, though certainly a modest and not inelegant young woman. They spent the night there, and in the morning Minami must have guessed that he and his companion were regarded rather doubtfully, for he decided on their moving to another hotel, farther round the lake shore, where they arrived in time for lunch. In the afternoon they played ping-pong with the family of the proprietor.

The next morning Minami bought a lot of caramels and some soda-water, and announced that they were going out for a walk. His usual manner was consistently eager and his voice high, so it would have been difficult to detect any additional excitement, had that been present in his manner. It was a cruel, dark morning and looked as if it might snow. However, the young couple went out. They walked a long way, and stopped at last in a lonely thicket of cryptomerias near the edge of the water. At about three in the afternoon Minami went alone to a hamlet about a quarter of a mile from the hotel, a hamlet through which they had passed in the morning. Here, at a little shop, the translator of the history of the world bought some more caramels, with which he returned over the snow under a black sky to his love.

Meanwhile, the letter he had written in Tokyo had been delivered to his father. It contained a polite

and respectfully filial intimation that as he wasn't allowed to marry the girl of whom he had spoken, he proposed not only to leave Tokyo with her, but to leave this life itself. The distracted father at once raised the alarm, and two days later General Minami, the friend who had delivered the letter (everything should be arranged by a go-between), a police-officer and a manservant set out from the little hotel where the pair had spent the second night.

About midday these searchers found the thicket. A large hole had been scooped in the snowy ground and there, half in and half out, lay the naked body of Tsuya. She was dead partly from exposure and partly from poison. Her young skin had hardly lost its freshness, and the perfect contours of her body still suggested softness rather than stiffness, life supple rather than stark lifelessness. Near her lay the empty soda-water bottles and some little folded squares of paper from the caramels. There were traces of a fire, and it seemed that the girl's clothes had been used as fuel: the cold must have been extreme.

While these things were being examined, four dapper young men arrived on the scene, two press photographers and two reporters. The body of Minami was not found till the next day. He had hung himself on a tree.

The newspapers were full of the story, and especially made much of the fact that the girl was still a virgin. They saw fit to use the word "platonic." The public curiosity was thoroughly aroused—for two days. A monthly magazine printed the story in its own way. Two schoolgirls lay in front of a train to show their sympathy. General Minami, the unfortunate father, remembered particularly the filial

submission of the younger man to his will, and asserted repeatedly, too late, that if he had known it would lead to this he would never have refused his consent to the union.

Many people were able to realise the strength and sincerity of this double suicide. Some said young Minami had always been impulsive and excitable, and this was his final folly. One of his teaching colleagues thought his death foolish, and said so. Many older people sympathised with the father, and were inclined to condemn the son. The general didn't say one word against the dead, and communicated very finely with Tsuya's family. Few of the younger generation were unstirred at the time of hearing, reading and discussing the story: very few remembered it long—a day seldom passes without a tale of suicide, a week seldom without one or two more or less sensational double ones.

Chiyé was thrilled to the marrow. Entranced, enraptured, intoxicated, her sympathy with the dead lovers was so great that she felt a kind of hopeful triumph, a kind of congratulatory enthusiasm. She couldn't feel grief at the death of her friend, and though she certainly missed her, the sense of loss was itself lost in thankful pride and joy that the love of those two had been consummated: for she regarded death as a conclusion quite as fitting as bodily union, or as bodily union followed by death. She laid hands on every possible newspaper, cut out every word relating to her friend, and read and re-read these cuttings until she practically knew them by heart. Then by a lucky chance she happened to be at the main door when an intimate friend of Minami's called for information: in the end he told her more

than she could tell him. From him, and from other sources, she was able to add quite a lot of detail to what she already knew.

She learnt how the general had already vaguely proposed a certain bride for his son; and of the character of the general, who came from Kagoshima and was rigidly conservative and feudally strict with his family—all the money the son had earned by his lectures, had been paid in, as a matter of course, to the father, and the young man had lived (and died) entirely on the proceeds of his translations. Chiyé was also able to see a brother of the dead girl, from whom she heard indirectly that Tsuya had expressed frankly in letters home the nature of her affection for Minami. Those warm phrases glowed in Chiyé's breast for the remainder of her life. Indeed, the whole affair left her with a lasting emotion, whose untarnished freshness would recur to her years later, purely as a memory, or as a consolation in her own disconsolate hours, or more mysteriously, as a kind of nameless hope.

But it cannot be said that she now entered on a period whose chief reality was memory, either idealised or applied, for present events of the first importance were about to take possession of her life, a rudderless boat driven about, continually and with varying violence, by the intentions—good, bad or indifferent—of other people. In this she took after her mother, who, even before being tamed by misfortune, had always submitted naturally to the control of those who wished to control her. Buddha, that aristocrat, teacheth not the servile to rebel.

X

"Oo! Mr. Jin did give my arm a twist this morning," Chiyé exclaimed in the servants' bedroom, rubbing that member, and wrinkling her nose with an expression indicative neither of pain nor disgust.

Jin had done more than that, were it only known. He had given a twist to her life-story. He had also made plans to give a party, not for her, but for two intimates. The amiable twisting of her arm had gone with the information that she would have to wait on his guests, a duty she now looked forward to with positive pleasure.

Whatever her first impression of Jin might have been, she had quickly got to like him. He was always cheerful. He paid attention to her. He was familiar with her as no other man had ever been. But she didn't let herself go. She didn't for one moment try to convince herself that there was going to be anything like a repetition of the feelings Tsuya may have had for Minami. She now liked Jin's attentions, and though she hardly thought it within the bounds of possibility that he would suggest such a thing, she would have no objection to marrying him. She was now in a state of mind and body when marriage would do her good. She kept her head, but she by no means kept Jin at arm's length. On the other hand, she wasn't going to let him take liberties. She continued to play the fish very prettily. He was certainly

hooked, and if she could help it he was neither going to get away nor be landed just yet.

"The two gentlemen I am expecting," said he, "are my intimate friends, and I want to give them a good supper. I was going to call in geisha, just to make things cheerful, but on second thoughts I won't. For one thing it's expensive, and for another there's no need. It's only to be a friendly little gathering. So you'd better dress yourself up as well as you can, and be as bright as possible. It's a pity you're such an ugly little thing——"

He flipped her ear.

"Oh, but yesterday you said I was a pretty little thing."

"I was only joying, fool. Don't forget to have the *saké* properly warmed. I've already told Mrs. Kikuchi about the dinner."

He speaks to me, she thought, going downstairs, just as if I was his wife. Mrs. Kikuchi also spoke to her about the coming evening, and advised her to smarten herself up and do her best: it was a good chance for her to show how clever she could be at waiting on the gentlemen, and pleasing them.

"Try to be bright," said the old dame, "and understand what the gentlemen say. Even if you don't, you must make them think you do, so mind you laugh at all their jokes. Nothing spoils a dinner so much as a dull waitress. Try to anticipate their wishes, and when they ask for anything get it as quickly as you can. Never ask them to repeat their orders, and don't keep them waiting. If they get a little tipsy, that won't hurt you, so don't worry. Of course they will expect you to drink with them, but you must just pretend—a sip here and a sip there—

you understand? And don't forget to show plainly that you admire them. Men are very easily made fools of. Flatter them a bit, you see?"

The mistress actually nudged the servant, and smiled ponderously instead of winking. Chiyé had never really been able to dislike her, and now this kind and confidential manner made the girl's heart go out to her. This advice was so motherly and yet so sisterly in tone. At that instant they were as closely leagued as a pair of suffragettes. People are sometimes united by a common sex, as by a common enemy.

Chiyé, feeling somehow that this was a critical evening, took great pains with her appearance. The result was good. Her hands were red, coarse and pudgy, and her wrists somewhat thick and strong, but her body was now at its best. She was not ungraceful in her movements, especially since the death of Tsuya. Her feet were small; she walked with small, simpering steps, the toes too much turned in; and occasionally, as she knelt or rose, an inch of pink skin appeared above her snow-white *tabi*. Her clothes were of fine flowered silk of several thicknesses, and the sleeves, as they swayed, showed the tantilising edge of a bright red lining. Her neck, thickly daubed with liquid powder, supported a head which had greatly improved since the arrival of the awkward bumpkin girl from Omura, and which was crowned with a glossy black, perfumed coiffure decorated with gaudy pins. When she looked in the glass her black eyes sparkled in her pretty face with the quickness of a bird on a blossoming bough. Her eyebrows, by nature a little too heavy, had been shaved into a pair of thin blue-black curves like two

quick strokes of a fine squirrel's-hair brush. Her mouth was ready to smile moistly. Excited by pleasure, a warmth rose to her cheeks. Her appearance caused surprise even among her everyday associates. There are many moments of transfiguration in every woman's life.

Jin was greatly struck when she first came into the room bringing trays with another maid, but as he was in the midst of conversation with his guests he made no comment, and affected not to notice her. When she came back alone the second time to wait, he spoke banteringly to her, and his guests began to take notice.

One of them, no longer young, tried, by the cultivation of a boisterous manner, to give an impression of his still having a young heart. The other had lately returned from China, and patriotic delight at his homecoming made him thirsty and talkative. In his cups he became garrulous, but nobody at first took much notice of him. Chiyé was kneeling between the other two. When the old man tried to make her drink she showed a coy confusion of nature and art, and had to answer all sorts of pleasantries, not all of the most refined. The gentlemen were so free with her that she found no difficulty in finding repartees to match their sallies.

All at once there came up from the street the sound of the night-watchman's drum and his chanted warning of fire:

"Shinanomachi, Shiocho!"

The returned exile from China had now got on to his reminiscences, while the others steadily gorged and sipped their warm rice-wine. He was no lover of the Chinese, he declared, a cruel, dishonest and

dirty race who ought to be the servants of the Japanese.

Suddenly, through and above the drunken laughter, the watchman's drum sounded much nearer, and his voice cried sadly—loudly, as if in the room:

"Shinanomachi, Shiocho!"

"I tell you," shouted the speaker, red in the face, "the Chinese don't understand the value of tears!"

"If the cursed Americans were not so sentimental," cried the old man, "we could punish all the Chinese, and make slaves of them, and shoot every one of them down, the dogs!"

Chiyé half-consciously waited for the watchman's drum and drone again. It came, already less loud, and long-drawn-out, dying away in the distance, more like a voice of hope forsaken than of present danger:

"Shinanomachi! Shiocho!"

"A fire somewhere," said Jin absently.

"Cruelty?" exclaimed the man from China. "You! you don't know what cruelty means. They'd tear the skin off your face. I've seen two soldiers spend an hour pulling a young girl in half, and enjoy doing it."

And he proceeded to tell them a story he couldn't have told sober. Only that morning, as a matter of fact, he had, in a crowded room, been heatedly defending the Chinese against every accusation, including this one and others much more trifling: truth by no means always lies in wine.

Chiyé alone was now sober, and into her mind there rushed the memory of that Chinaman she had seen at Asakusa, the one with the snake in his mouth,

and she turned her head and hid her face in her sleeve. Her skin was creeping with horror.

"What! what's the matter?" cried Jin. "Here, let's make her drink——"

And he caught her round the middle, pinioned her arms, twisted her backwards and called to the others to make her drink. One picked up a cup, but the old man grabbed a porcelain *saké*-flask and forced its mouth into hers. The china gritted against her teeth. She struggled and vainly shook her head as the warm liquid kept on jetting into her throat and up her nose, until she sputtered and choked.

At this moment one of the paper doors was slid back, and anybody noticing that could also have made out dimly in the dark passage the large kneeling bulk of a woman in a greyish-white apron. However, nobody in the room saw Mrs. Kikuchi, who had just looked in to see how things were going, and who now leaned forward with a slow cow-like movement, so that her head and massive bust were actually in the room. On her face she wore (she could afford to wear it) an almost good-humoured, an urbane expression of easy tolerance, and what practically came to a satisfied smile, and then withdrew, sliding-to once more the sibilant screen.

Chiyé was released to fetch more *saké,* and the gentleman from China, red in the face, began to snooze. The old man talked heartily, and Jin felt very cheerful; but under his gaiety there was all the time a vague lurking anticipation, which found some satisfaction in an increasing wish to get rid of his guests. Perhaps this early spring night helped to cause the restlessness in his veins. When Chiyé came back he asked her the time.

"What, is it so late?" exclaimed the older man. "*Oi.*" And he began to try and wake his companion.

"Drink," said Jin.

They drank, getting more and more noisy. Jin suddenly turned to Chiyé and said rapidly in a low voice:

"Go and order a taxi."

She didn't come back till the taxi had arrived, and then announced that it was at the door.

"Well, I don't want you to go," said Jin, "but your car's waiting at the entrance."

"What? I never ordered a car," said the old man.

"Of course you did," said Jin. "Are you so far gone that you've forgotten?" He turned to Chiyé for confirmation: "Didn't you hear him?"

"Oh, yes, that was why I went to order it," said she.

"Then tell it to go away, you wench," said the old man angrily.

"You'll have to pay a lot if you keep it waiting," said Jin. And so, bickering and protesting, the two guests were at last piloted downstairs and bundled into the taxi. It was about two o'clock in the morning.

Jin came back to his room and stretched himself on the floor. When Chiyé appeared he ordered her to take away the things and lay out the bed.

"But leave the *saké*," he said, refilling his cup. "And bring another bottle."

She cleared away, and then opened the cupboard and drew out the mattress. He let her make the bed, and just as she was finishing, stepped behind her, threw his arm round her neck and tripped her up.

They both fell on the mats. She gave a cry of surprise, but made no resistance.

"Drink some more," he said, "come on."

He made her finish the last flaskful with him, cup for cup. She hardly knew what she was doing. Her windpipe was on fire, and her eyes watering.

"Now I must go," she said, trying to stand up.

"No, no," he said several times, with extraordinary and unnecessary emphasis. "No, no. There is no need to go. Absolutely no need."

They rolled over together on the floor. Suddenly she was afraid, and struggled to get up. He thrust his hand into her coiffure, which fell half apart, and one long coil of hair broke loose and unrolled almost to her knees. Against the smooth silk it looked like a rapturous black cascade in a drunken dream.

"Help me to bed," he said, "before you go."

She helped him out of his clothes, standing behind him, and putting his scanty night komono over his shoulders. She always remembered afterwards his long straight back, wide at the shoulders, narrow at the waist, muscular and golden. He tied his girdle and then turned, his face purplish white, and fondled her ear. Suddenly he threw her down, kicking, on the bed, and before she could get up had switched off the light.

"No, no, no," she said, trying to get away, but he at once caught her again, and somehow she couldn't, she didn't want to, she didn't attempt to resist.

XI

SHE lay with him again the next night. She became his mistress. And there were no regrets. Looking back, she saw Minami and Tsuya, their young arms interlaced for a pillow. Looking forward, she considered the possibility of a home and a child. She loved Jin. She was happy.

He, however, hadn't the slightest intention either of marrying her or of continuing to live with her for more than a short time. She clung to him with such faithfulness that he was in two minds what to let her think. But in truth she neither ventured to trust nor to doubt him. She was contented with the present, not absolutely content, but happier than she seemed to have been before, and happy in a new way which seemed somehow old and familiar. Jin couldn't make up his mind whether to promise a marriage he didn't intend to fulfil, or whether simply to let things drift and leave her guessing. He took the latter course, but she never attempted to guess, leaving everything to him, less from confidence than from force of circumstances. And suddenly he blurted out one day as if he were joking:

"Of course you've never imagined that I should continue to live with you?"

And laughed.

She looked at him without answering. There was no reproach in her gaze, no surprise. It was impos-

sible for him to know what she really felt. And he didn't greatly care.

Indeed, she felt neither surprised nor reproachful, worked as usual, but with a deep inward calm, a physical balance, that she had never known before. She continued to serve Jin, and he gave her presents, not valuable ones. Everybody knew that she lived with him and nobody made a fuss. When he was out or when she was alone or not working she sometimes picked up a newspaper. It gave her a unique pleasure, with its unexpectedness and sensational appeals to her imagination. She happened one day to see a loose sheet of the morning paper lying in the kitchen where the cook had put it down, and as she was just going up to her room picked it up and took it with her. There was at the bottom of the page, just above some advertisements, a short paragraph which cut her to the heart so that she never forgot it. It left, one might say, a scar on her memory. Yet the journalists couldn't have thought it important, or they wouldn't have put it down there. Perhaps they wanted too much space that day for the arrival in Japan of the executive committee of the Pan-Pacific Peaceful Penetration Push from America.

In a poor suburb of Tokyo, said the paper, a child of three had been murdered. The circumstances were these. Two married women lived next door to each other. One was the mother of the child; the other, older, was barren. The barren one had become obsessed with her misfortune; unbalanced; until, maddened by that mother-and-child happiness always under her eyes, she had, in a paroxysm of suffering, put an end to it. She had confessed everything quite openly. That was all.

Into Chiyé's mind the effect of this story, though powerful, worked its way slowly. Eventually, it diverted her attention from the union with Jin, which still went on, to the hopes of becoming a mother; and with these hopes she was now entirely taken up. It was not that the two states of feeling were different things—there was only one flood of emotion: it had now set all in one direction. The first rare freshness and activity of her body, followed by some more disturbing sensations, made her pretty sure that what she most desired would happen, and she passed busy days in expectant peace. The time of waiting was then broken by two important events.

Late on a dark, steamy, rainy midsummer afternoon she returned from an errand and had hardly folded her umbrella when one of the maids said to her:

"You didn't tell me that Mr. Jin was leaving this afternoon: I went to his room to prepare tea, and found that he had already left——"

"No, I didn't, I'm sorry," said Chiyé in an expressionless voice. Already left! She was taken completely unawares by this news. Somehow the fact that he had gone (she had half supposed he would go soon) didn't matter to her so much as the fact that he had gone without saying good-bye to her. People glanced sideways at her to see how she liked being deserted, but there was no sign as to how she took it. A few days later she heard from Jin, and it was a nice letter. He kindly enclosed some money, but as she was now drawing a small regular wage from Mrs. Kikuchi, this tribute, or quittance-money, was not absolutely needed.

The shock of his going away she only felt in its

entirety long afterwards. This was so often the way with her—things happened to her quickly, and not always unexpectedly, and she couldn't take them all in at once. Slowly the significance of facts, whose meaning she thought to have realised at the time of their occurrence, would bear gradually in on her; as a bank of clouds, at first ranged apparently immovably on the horizon, will soon, slowly toppling, advance, forced forward by some large wind too high up for humanity to feel, and, preceded by a few scarfy and dissolving forerunners, will spread, and darken, and overspread the whole mild sky. The sky may be hidden for weeks, but the clouds don't last, continually changing their forms. Afterwards the sky is serener than ever.

She was not only slow to realise, but, once having realised, quick to forget or overlook (not necessarily to forgive) where most people would bear active remembrance or malice. Her anger, if it could be called that, didn't last. And just at the moment when she had more or less forgotten things they had a way of forcing themselves back on her. It was a long time, for instance, since she had thought much about her aunt, but now who should walk into the Kamé-fuku Hotel but that very woman!—the same as ever, only a little more so than usual.

In the same room, the office, where they had once sat together before, the three women, all bowing and smiling and getting politer and politer every minute, were once more assembled. In the background sat the younger son of Mrs. Kikuchi at his telephone and ledger: her elder son wasn't there, for he was nearly always out. This meeting was by no means merely formal. The aunt and niece were genuinely

glad to see each other. Chiyé couldn't help sniffing and blubbering in her sleeve. Crocodile tears? Why should they be? She was not a person to feign emotion. That her aunt had sold her into her present life didn't now sway her mind: the far-eastern character, with its elaborate traditional machinery of revenge, seems, whether from fatalism or inertia, often to know better how to forgive than the Christian character, whose business is supposed to be the turning of the other cheek. But Chiyé was soon filled with curiosity to know what her aunt had come for. In Japan one only pays calls with a purpose. Mrs. Kikuchi on this occasion was positively motherly, and looked at Chiyé almost with pride. As for the aunt, her affability was quite remarkable. After a barrage of platitudinous compliments had been created, she came down to business.

Now it had happened that a distant relation, some kind of cousin, had come to her from Omura with an offer to adopt Chiyé and eventually to arrange for her marriage and safeguard her future, at the same time asking the aunt her opinion, and suggesting that she should go to Tokyo and put the matter to Chiyé. The aunt had replied that Chiyé was in service, and could hardly be released without a considerable payment. This upset the cousin a little, but he didn't yet withdraw his offer. Wishing to hear more details, he urged the aunt to go to Tokyo which she agreed to do.

Her scheme was to see Mrs. Kikuchi and the girl together and to tell Chiyé at once of the cousin's offer: naturally thinking that the girl would be eager to go back to her native village, and that Mrs. Kikuchi, in order to avoid losing a good servant,

might privately advance something to prevent it. This ingenious plan didn't work out in practice exactly as she had foreseen. In the first place, Chiyé now surprised her very much by expressing very little wish to return to Omura! Mrs. Kikuchi had a twinkle in her eye. Her second son, with his mouth open, stared vacantly at the group. The puzzled aunt began to persuade. Chiyé wriggled her shoulders awkwardly. Mrs. Kikuchi said that the girl was very happy where she was, but that she shouldn't attempt to try and force her to stay if she really wanted to go; —conquer by yielding!—however, as the girl was used to her work and now able to earn wages, no doubt she would be more prudent to stay where she was. The aunt, exasperated, smiled more winningly than ever; she positively beamed with rage. As she was again expecting an addition to her family, a small financial contribution to the home would have been welcome, especially as she had had the expense of coming to Tokyo. She didn't know what to do. If she could see the girl alone, possibly she could persuade her, but obviously Mrs. Kikuchi would prevent that. . . .

While she was hesitating she was lost, for the voice of one of the maids was repeatedly calling down the passage for Chiyé, who at once rose, bowing, and went out of the room. The subsequent conversation between the other two convinced the aunt that her attempt was hopeless, and that the only possible courses left to her were either to write to Chiyé and persuade her, or else to get the cousin to come to Tokyo, which might perhaps induce Mrs. Kikuchi to seek her as an ally in making the girl stay. By the time Chiyé returned to the room, her aunt had de-

cided to leave, and after a lot of ceremonious leave-taking the visitor was bowed out. Mrs. Kikuchi, after this, could hardly have been more maternal in her manner.

The root of the matter was Chiyé's indifference. This requires little analysis, for she was now a person of one idea only, beyond which she cared for nothing. And it was not the idea that she was going to have a child.

XII

THE idea which now possessed her was a terrible one. It was, that perhaps after all she was not going to have a child. To most people, no doubt, in such a position as hers, this would be cause for thankfulness, a matter of profound relief. But she was not most people. She was Hara Chiyé. She wanted one thing in the world, and have it she must. As for Omura—her aunt—Jin—the future—they were shadows in a dream.

She was alone, and she couldn't stand it any longer. If Jin had married her, she wouldn't have been much less alone, for her loneliness was a matter of the deepest feelings in her whole existence. She was utterly alone: only one comforter could come to her out of the world, and that comforter must come out of herself. She hadn't yet by any means given up her present hope. She only had the suspicion that she might be deceiving herself. She counted on her fingers the months since Jin had left her.

Once or twice a week she was allowed to go out for a bath. The bath-house was in the next street but one, and she usually got there when it was rather crowded. This afternoon, however, about a fortnight after her aunt's visit, the season being late summer, she got out much earlier than usual, and found only two people in the bath, married women

of middle age, deep in conversation, a conversation that had begun somewhat obstetrically. They seemed to have plenty of leisure, for after twenty minutes they showed no sign of departure, while one or two other people came and went. One of the pair sat on the edge and dandled her stubby legs in the water, where they appeared curiously foreshortened. The other sat on the bottom with only her head sticking out of the water, her hair screwed up in a top-knot, and never stopped talking for an instant. Chiyé far outstayed her usual time to listen to them.

"Where do you say it is?" asked one.

"At the Temmonji temple in Koïshikawa," said the other, "just over there—you know? The stone in question is on the right as you go in at the south gate, the main gate. Behind some trees, a cherry tree, I think, and some dark bushes."

"Ah, so."

"Quite a tall stone, six or seven feet high. They say it has been successful in a great number of cases."

"Yes, I've heard that. They say one can see somebody there almost every day."

"Oh, yes. One should go in the evening. That's the best time, they say."

"And the wife of——"

"Yes, I was going to tell you. The wife of Mr. Hoshiai had been to doctors, priests, fortune-tellers and all such people. She was quite in despair, for she had already been married six years. Then she prayed at this stone only three or four times—just came in the evening, you know, and prayed—and now she has a fine boy more than three months old."

"Wonderful!"

"A very old stone. It is said to date from the time of Genroku, but I hardly believe it can be as old as that."

The speaker, dripping, clamored out of the water; so that Chiyé suddenly realised how long she herself had been sitting there, and hurriedly got out and dressed. As she came out in the street her head felt quite fuddled with steam, but her heart beat quickly as she at once began to think of a plan to visit the temple of Temmonji in Koïshikawa.

How peaceful the streets were as she went back! Children were playing, old men sat smoking and chatting at the open shop fronts, and young women with babies on their backs could be seen moving in the lighted interiors of the houses. At the corner the policeman sat in his little kiosk with a red lamp, doing nothing. Arm-in-arm, some idle students in thin *yukata* clattered along on high clogs. There was a smell of cooking, intermingled with stray whiffs of perfume and sewage. At a fishmonger's, the electric shone wetly on the various glistening corpses of the fish, all of whose noses were pointing in the same direction, and over which a loud speaker coughed from its black vulcanite throat a lecture on English grammar. The boy from the macaroni shop hurried past on his bicycle, pedalling frenziedly with his fat legs in white tights, and balancing on one hand a lacquered tray laden with bowls of hot, savoury food. A blind masseur tapped his way along slowly, blowing now and then a plaintive whistle, over against which could be heard the tinny whining of a mouth-organ.

An active young woman with a towel in her hand, clothes like a servant's, and a slightly dishevelled ap-

pearance, turned down a narrow and smelly by-street towards the Kaméfuku Hotel. She wasn't walking quickly, but there was an intent expression on her face, because above and between her eyes her smooth girlish forehead had a tiny pucker: it could hardly be called a frown. It wasn't dark yet, for the sky was perfectly clear, with a reflected glow as if turquoise-colour should become transparent. In luminous air floated a far and pinkish new moon, and almost immediately, no doubt, it would become possible to notice here and there the sparkle of a star. At the sky, however, that playground of everlasting change, Chiyé didn't happen to look up. As she passed the kitchen window of the hotel she could hear the sizzling sound of frying.

Now, she very soon contrived a chance to pay an evening visit to the Temmonji. She walked there in less than half an hour, entered the gate, and found everything as the woman had said. An old scarred stone, mossy, and roughly cylindrical in shape, with a round top, stood behind a small shrubbery. In the dusky shadows it had an ancient, awful secrecy, an almost godlike presence. Chiyé looked hastily round. There was nobody much about, though she could hear some footsteps on a flagged path, and distant motors and trams.

Before the monolith were one or two stone tablets with inscriptions, a few cheap sacred pictures damaged by the weather, a bamboo vase with a fresh spray of leaves, a small stone trough in which were the remains of fine powdery ash, a pile of small stones and a money box. Chiyé opened her left hand, and from its sweaty palm picked, with the forefinger and thumb of her right, two coins, which she dropped into this

box; and then, groping with her right hand inside the flap of her left sleeve, drew forth a small pebble, which she added to the pile before her. Her only regret was that she had no incense to burn. She bowed her head, clapped her hands together inaudibly and prayed for a baby.

She prayed earnestly for some time, her eyes tight shut, and occasionally softly clapped, palm to palm again, her hot housemaid hands. At last she opened her eyes and bowed to that dark image. Turning to go, she saw that the overhanging boughs of a cherry tree near by were all tagged and knotted with paper prayers. And a great peace came on her, as if some responsibility, some load, some fear, had been taken from her. She may not have had the faith of certain conviction, but she was wonderfully soothed. Lying in bed that night, she snuggled down into the clothes and hugged her knees against her plump country breasts in a transport of nameless and unreasonable ecstasy.

This feeling of exaltation did not soon wear off. It was as if she shared some delightful secret with that wise and ancient pillar, whose inanimate silence was so full of divine wisdom. And when a letter came from her aunt, urging her to leave Tokyo, she only read it once and then thrust it away somewhere and forgot all about it. A month produced none of the desired symptoms, so she went to worship again.

This time she stopped in the twilight at a stall near the entrance of Temmonji to buy the devotional burning sticks she forgot before. As she came through the trees towards the shadowy corner of the temple compound, the figure of a young woman, elegantly dressed, and hiding her face in a lacy wrap, came from

the direction of the stone and hurried past her, leaving in the air a trail of perfume. Chiyé turned curiously to watch her; the figure went towards the great entrance gate, passed through and went down the steps. Chiyé moved across to the left and looked over the wall just in time to see the elusive and expensive visitor getting into a very large motor at the kerb. A servant in uniform closed the door, bowed and got in beside the driver. The headlights were suddenly switched on, the long car turned and glided away like a shadow after its swiftly travelling projection of white light.

Chiyé wonderingly approached her god. Before him was a spark at the tip of a still-burning joss-stick, from which a single thread of blue sweet smoke streamed waveringly upwards in the tranquil evening air. Still burning? So the rich also came to this place, the young wives of millionaires! It was quite enough to confirm her faith in the value of her prayers.

But to those prayers the stone returned a stony answer. She had confided to it her most intensely real, her most human feelings. She had prayed to it, and yet she never knew that it was simply a phallus. If she had known, she could have prayed to it no more fervently. When the extreme limit of the possible period of gestation was passed, she gave up hope, but still not absolutely.

XIII

A SECOND letter came from her aunt, blaming her for not answering the first, and repeating the same urgent advice. Chiyé wrote back a short and polite note saying she didn't want to leave Tokyo; but she never made the slightest proper attempt to analyse her feelings until long after the letter had been posted. And then, when the idea of going back to Omura did suggest itself to her, somehow she always pushed it into the back of her mind, with the result that there the idea of her native place gradually underwent, after long preparation, a curious sublimation.

For example, once when she was very young, she happened, playing at noon in early summer with others of her own age, to come unexpectedly, behind a little farm surrounded with camphor trees, upon a whole field blazing with salmon-pink peonies. They had been planted by the owner simply for his pleasure, but going back another year to look at them she found he had had to convert the land into a paddy field, for he was short of money, and Japan was short of Japanese rice. He never planted peonies again, but in her mind the field of quivering, globular, full-orbed strong, delicate, flesh-coloured flowers glowed on always in the rays of an ever-bright meridian sun. The shiny petals, seemingly of the texture of strong silk, could be easily crushed with the fingers or slit

with the nails; but the petals in her memory were indestructible.

In the Omura of her mind there was a field of peonies; in the Omura to which her body was asked to return there was only a muddy rice-field. This contrast didn't only appear in vegetable affairs, it came in everywhere, all along the line. The distance between the two Omuras was always increasing, the one gleaming in a tender haze; the other bare as bones. In one her mother still lived; in one her mother was dead. One was the scene of old whole-hearted hopes whose vagueness made them dearer, the Omura of her childhood; the other exhaled a faint whiff of disillusion, this Omura she couldn't go back to. Her mind had kept much of its childish quality, so let it not be supposed that she carefully reasoned out and balanced things for herself. As for saying to herself that if she went back her prospects would be better than if she stayed—she would never have dared to say such a thing, even had she been capable of saying it. She was by no means a fool, though she may have been a simpleton, but there was nothing and nobody to push or drag her away, and so she stayed.

She had completely forgotten how her mother had said it was "a piece of good luck" for her to go to Tokyo. Had she remembered, she would have agreed whole-heartedly. She would have said yes, she considered she was lucky to be in Tokyo still, she was lucky to be something more than a mere country girl. She regretted nothing, was neither particularly elated nor depressed, and hoped for she knew not what. How many people are in the same boat! She became friendlier with the other servants, and a busy gossip,

though not a malicious one. She knew all that was to be known of the ins and outs of the affairs of everybody in the hotel and many people outside it. Every newspaper she set eyes on she set hands on, and gradually formed a bulky collection of cuttings (some of the earlier ones, including the well-worn accounts of the double death of Minami and Tsuya, were already yellowing with age) which she kept in a large cardboard box covered with red satin. In the same box there was a small doll.

She was given much of the marketing to do, and soon got familiar with the numerous tradesmen at the back door, the cheeky ones, the servile ones and the domineering ones. She proved herself a bargainer with the makings of a good housewife. Sometimes at her work, washing a floor, for instance, or hanging out blue-and-white clothes to dry on the breezy platform on the roof, or late at night just before undressing, she would indulge herself in a little pleasant melancholy: she would even think of going back to Omura. Then she could be heard crooning some sentimental folksong, like the *Sadobushi* which she had picked up somewhere:

> Toward Sado Island, towards Sado Island,
> Inclined trees and grasses;
> There's a dreamy and a happy land.

It is a kind of *Swanee River,* and she sang it in a tiny, far-away voice, not melodious at all, but so thin and shrill that it was almost like an insect's.

Sometimes when she was not aware of it the great body of Mrs. Kikuchi would pause at the top of the stairs, or at a door or window to watch her or listen to her for a moment at her work. Then both women,

one unconscious of the other's presence, might be smiling secretly to themselves.

Hara Chiyé is still working at the Kaméfuku Hotel. She now fancies herself in love with the butcher's young man who comes twice a day to the back door. They are, indeed, likely to marry soon. If they do, Chiyé will of course hope for a child. Why not? Don't you remember?—That fortune-teller she went to said there was no reason why she shouldn't have a child.

THE SLEEPING HUSBAND

"All stories are infinite serials."

THE SLEEPING HUSBAND

[I FEEL a few lines are needed to explain how this fragment came into my possession. When I was living in one of the better quarters of Tokyo I happened to be acquainted with a certain officer in the army, my neighbour, and his family. Owing to circumstances which will appear below, this family had occasion to take refuge in my house for several days, and Madame S., the officer's wife, occupied much of that time in writing. When she left the house she was in a great hurry, and left her manuscript behind. I am not a scholar of the Japanese language, but as soon as I learnt that she had been writing personal memoranda, I wrote to her in Oita prefecture and asked her permission to have them translated and to allow me to print them abroad, without her name. This request surprised her so much that she at first refused, saying that she had never dreamed of writing those pages for any eyes but her own, and expressing shame and confusion at her carelessness in leaving the papers behind when she had to quit my house at a moment's notice. As she didn't specifically ask for them to be returned to her, I pressed for her consent to a translation, urging her with the obvious remark that the fact she had written for the love of the thing and for her own satisfaction showed her to have something of the character of an artist: and I quoted an anecdote of a famous Chinese painter of old times, who said that he worked from the same necessity and inner law as the silkworm spinning her cocoon, that is to say, according to nature. I didn't feel that this was an exaggeration, for if there was one thing that I particularly remarked about Madame S. in the short time that I knew her, it was her natural grace. At last she obligingly yielded to an importunate foreigner, and here is the result. The too literal translation I have simply recast, without adding or leaving out anything.]

I

[This first part was written in her own house, and carried to mine when she came. The first page seems to be lost.]

" . . . morning, and as I sit here I recall that it must have stopped snowing quite early last night. When I looked out this morning the sky was gem-like. I don't know what the time is now, but the sun has risen quite high in the sky, it makes the snow warm and the white layers on the roofs are rapidly melting. Glittering drops are falling from the eaves as heavily as if it were raining, and when the paper screens are shut and I see on them the shadows of the falling drops, I can almost imagine a sunny shower outside. I open them again, and the first thing I see is a young maple tree in the garden, which has been bent down under a mass of snow—now unexpectedly dislodged! so the young tree springs back to its former position. What a sugary, swishing sound that was! I remember how frightened I was as a child when I heard for the first time a bamboo cracking under a weight of snow in the middle of the night with a loud report.

"And now under the eaves there is quite a little runnel, and flakes of foam and bubbles float away, whirl away on it like boats on the rapids of Hozu. A light steam is rising from the ground. I wish I could continue for ever to look at the beauties of nature.

"In this room, on the mats just behind me, my husband is sleeping with his mouth open. His head is only a few feet from my knees, but it seems much farther away. Toki, the servant, is out, and has taken the children, so the house is unusually quiet. There are two sounds, the ceaseless drip-dropping of the melting snow and the snoring of my husband. I am in just such a position where a woman ought to be happy—between her sleeping husband and a quiet garden; and yet, although my children are healthy and I am devoted to them, although I am not starving, I am miserable. I don't complain aloud (how unthinkable!), so I'll just put down on paper as well as I can a few of my feelings. If I can get them out of me and see what they look like, then afterwards I'll destroy it all. One thing I'll remember is that my life is not as bad as poor Toki's has been. I'll try and say more about her than about myself, for she has told me so much, and as for writing about my own life I don't know how or where on earth to begin—not because so much has happened to me, but because—well, I don't know.

"What really surprises me is that even when I married I was so ready to expect the best from men. I didn't think they were angels, but then nor did I think they were devils: I don't think that now, but I know some of them come near it. Ah, this life is a dream. Before I married I must have been blind or deaf. I certainly couldn't have been ignorant, for there were plenty of signs and hints, even plainer things to guide me. Was I so innocent, or simply a fool? Was I more foolish than other girls? I wonder.

"I remember how we used to call all our men-teachers at the high school by the names of flowers,

nicknaming them violet, peach-blossom, tiger lily, *kikyo,*[1] and so on. How absurd! Yet I believe I'd do the same again, I could do it now, for I am not disillusioned or cynical, I am simply unhappily married.

"To take, for instance, young Kishi, who has quite unwittingly caused most of this last unreasonable trouble, I don't know whether I love him with a mother's or a friend's, or a kind of lover's love, or a mixture of these, but I know my love for him is a true thing, and there would be to me nothing ridiculous in calling him by a flower name. Which one would suit him? I can't think exactly now. Perhaps *yamabuki*—the single one, which I, unlike most people, have always preferred to the double. . . .

"How angry my husband would be if he by chance read these words! Is there anything in *this* house which doesn't make him angry, at any time whatsoever? But I'm not afraïd. I don't love secrets so much. I have already admitted to him that I still feel, and shall always feel, a sincere but innocent affection for Kishi. I love him with a pure, true love. Is it likely that I should have committed adultery with that mere boy, as I am accused of doing? No, no, I am quite the faithful wife. Oh, quite. But the only answer I got to my honest assertions, for my frankness, was a blow in the face with my husband's knuckles. It was not the first. But I'm going too fast. I'm not going to try and write my life (as if I could!), but I must go back a bit. . . .

[1] The Chinese bell-flower.

II

[This section was written in my house.]

"It is strange I should have stopped just there. The last words I wrote were 'go back a bit.' But where have I gone? Now I'm not even writing in my own house, but actually in a foreigner's. He's kind to the children and to me—rather over-polite to me, which is ridiculous. It's unnatural to be always saying 'thank you' and 'I beg your pardon' to a woman, but I can't help admitting that I like it. If I'm going to explain how I come to find myself here, in a foreigner's house, with the two children and Toki, I must stop this way of writing, it's too fluent and colloquial, like talking. And I began in such a high-flown way—well, I can't keep up such a formal style. I must be as brief as possible.

"Well, then, my esteemed parents are well-to-do as they have always been, but their reasons for marrying me to this man will always seem to me inscrutable. I have learnt to be dutifully filial to my father and mother, but I told them I didn't want to marry a soldier, and that I could never love this particular soldier. I never liked the look of him, and I was able to see him at least three times before my marriage. I have twice asked my parents to arrange a divorce, but of course it was useless to ask. How could I expect them to agree? Once, also, when my husband had

spent everything and even borrowed money on account of one of his affairs with women, he forced me to go and ask them for money. This they also refused; so now I don't see much of them, though I write regularly. Nobody can call me undutiful, either as daughter or wife. I have long since got used to the indifference of my parents and the behaviour of my husband. He has been much worse during the last year. I have got used to his drunkenness and dirty talk to the children, but once he actually came in with his friend Captain H. and two geisha. It wouldn't be true to say that all were completely drunk, though the two men certainly were. The girls had been drinking. Not only did I have to endure this orgy in my house, I had to assist at it. I had to receive those women, and serve them with smiles. Why do I speak of it as if it were some extraordinary episode of the distant past? It may happen again. I have never complained, nor have I told anybody but Toki. She said she was sorry for me.

"Our house is too big for us, my husband said from the beginning, so one room has always been let, and the rest of us have crowded into two others. The lodger is a student, and I've got to know him and some of his friends quite well: one of them, called Kishi, happened to get ill. I was sorry for him, and liked him, and as he was poor and living in bad lodgings I asked him to come to our house and we would look after him till he got well again. My husband was away for the autumn manœuvres, and then for another fortnight on some other duty. By the time he came back Kishi, after being with us about a month, had gone away quite fit to his rooms again. At his rooms, it seems, there is a young girl, the

daughter of his landlady, who has long loved him in vain; and in the house next door is a private in my husband's regiment who loves that girl. She never looks at the soldier, and thinks only of Kishi, who never looks at her! It is easy to imagine the despair of the soldier, but I think he acted very foolishly. He wrote an anonymous letter to my husband saying that Kishi had slept with me for a month. What did he expect to gain? Did he think to make Kishi appear disreputable to the girl? Did he owe me some unknown grudge? Did he hope to win the favour of my husband, his superior? Whatever he hoped, the results were unfortunate. Perhaps I had been indiscreet to let Kishi sleep in the same room as me, but Toki and the children were there too.

"My husband came back suddenly, two days earlier than he was expected, drunk of course, seized me by the hair, and started blurting out the whole story with a lot of disgusting remarks which I have no wish to record. Our student lodger slipped out of the house and went and told Kishi to escape, as my husband was threatening to kill him; and then came back and tried to protect me. He kindly knocked my husband down, and we had no more trouble that night, only words.

"The next evening I went out to buy something, and when I came back my husband had drawn his sword and was ordering the children to kneel down, because he intended to behead them. They were too terrified to cry, and had already started to obey him. Their little eyes seemed much larger than usual. He was really wild, so our student lodger went for the police: but they refused to come, saying they had no right to rebuke a man in his own house unless

some crime had actually been committed. When the lodger returned, my husband was kneeling on me and trying to pull out my hair: Toki had managed to hide the children. At last, leaving my husband and our lodger in argument, I went out with Toki and the children, and we spent the night safely in a police shelter. The two policeman on duty were awfully kind, and bought some goody-goodies for the children; while one of them obligingly told me the story of his life.

"My husband has already got his revenge for my supposed union with Kishi. He has arranged to be transferred to Oita prefecture, so well known for its roughness and remoteness, and I am ordered there with the childen. My husband is taking several days to 'celebrate' his departure from Tokyo, and our lodger forbids me to go to my own house at all. How we shall finish packing I don't know. Meanwhile I am taking refuge in this foreigner's house, and while we have been here Toki has told me all her history, so that I am ashamed now to have spoken of my own troubles. She knows better than I the meaning of lonely sorrow, yet how cheerful she is! She has worked for us for months, and there is always a smile on her face, which is almost a baby face, though she must be nearly twenty. I believe it is impossible for her to feel anger, but I know she can feel fear and other things deeply enough. I have never seen her appear either sad or annoyed at anything, and even in telling me her story she smiled all the time.

III

"Toki had never told me anything of her experiences until quite lately, when she saw that I was just beginning to suffer. She said she was afraid I would get rid of her if I knew her story. Most people would refuse to keep such a servant, she said, and it's true. Certainly from her baby face I could never have dreamt what she has been through; and yet, now and again, I have almost suspected that there was something under the surface—she has a strange way of narrowing her eyes, especially in moments of doubt or apprehension, as when she is asked some unusual question. . . .

"Before I begin, I must put it down that I don't reproach anybody. If my parents choose to abandon me to such a husband, is it not because they believe that I belong now entirely to him and his family? Doesn't it require some sacrifice, some unselfishness on their part, to give me up? I can't help feeling that they love me dearly. If anybody read these pages they might thing I was blaming my husband. I am not blaming him: I am unhappy with him, and I am sorry for my children. Nor would I blame anybody for Toki's life, for there's something wrong, something evil, that makes people bad. They are not naturally bad. Her father must love her as his daughter, and yet she says she can't see his love. *I* can see it, *I* can realise that he persecutes and bullies

her because he loves her. I believe I can understand some of her feelings, though she told me her story without much comment, without saying very particularly whether people were good or bad, so I'll try and do the same. She doesn't seem to judge people by what they are, but by what they do—that is, if she judges them at all!

"Her father, she told me, is quite well off, but loves his money so much that he refused to let her go to a high school, which he could easily have afforded. Her home is in Chiba prefecture, and she has several brothers and sisters. She didn't speak much of her youngest days, but there are two incidents she particularly remembers, which she told me at the end, so I'll keep them to the end. It is quite plain that even as a child she was unhappy at home, and so as soon as she was old enough she ran away.

"Although she had never been there she ran straight to Tokyo, and went to a servants' exchange or employment bureau, where she was told to wait in an anteroom, but was almost at once shown into the manager's room. The manager was talking to an oldish man, who seemed to Toki to have a fine character. He sat a little aside while she answered all the manager's questions, but when she was asked what kind of work she wanted to do she didn't quite know what to answer. It was at this point that the older man leant forward, touched her on the knee and told her in a confidential tone that he was the head of a private detective agency. His firm, he said, were at present looking for some clever young women detectives—how would she like to try that? She had no money and she was hungry, so she said she'd like it very much.

" 'Then,' said the gentleman, 'let's go along at once. It's all right, we'll take good care of you.'

"And she went with him. It was already evening, so they didn't go to his office, but to a private house in the suburbs. Here she prepared supper, and they both sat down to eat it. The gentleman was very kind, and brought her some soda water to drink. Very soon after this she either fell asleep or became unconscious, for the soda water was doped. She says that she has no clear knowledge of what went on in the night, but she awoke late in the morning in a very confused state of mind and body, and the first thing she saw was a letter from her host which said that he didn't like to wake her up as she seemed so tired, that he had had to go out to business and that he hoped to return in the evening. Her first thought was to escape. But where could she go? She knew nobody in Tokyo. She was alone in the house. It would be better to wait and see what turned up. Anything would be better than going back home, back to the father and elder brother she particularly hated. . . .

"And in the evening the nice gentleman returned, bringing with him her father and that same elder brother. He had left early in the morning for Chiba prefecture, and, representing himself as a private detective, had informed the girl's father that by a lucky chance and his own adroitness he had already managed to trace the girl. If a considerable sum of money were immediately advanced to him, he thought he could lay hands on her. She might, he said, be in the town, but if she was found in the suburbs it would be necessary to pay a bit extra. On the way back he affected to enquire at an office, and then came straight to the house where he had left Toki. When

she saw her father and brother she dashed out of the room, snatched a pair of scissors off a low table and locked herself up in the W.C. There, overwhelmed, maddened with rage and shame, fear and disappointment, she ran the scissors quickly over her head, and hacked off roughly but speedily the whole of her long and beautiful black hair. At the moment when the three men were about to force the door she walked out with an extraordinary jagged head, and dangling in her hand thick and lustrous hanks of hair. At first her relations were too surprised even to speak, but they soon hurried her out of the house and took her home. When they got back they were so ashamed of her escapade and of her appearance that they kept her shut up in one room. She says she was forbidden to leave it even for a bath, half-starved, and treated with great cruelty. After three weeks of this frightful confinement she escaped to Tokyo again.

IV

"THIS time she went to quite a different employment agency, and as soon as she came there realised how much better it was than the former one. It was kept by a middle-aged man and his wife, simple folk, who asked her to spend the night in their house which was tacked on to the back of the office, and this she cautiously but willingly consented to do. The wife of the manager was really kind and motherly in her manner, and suggested that Toki would do well to become a hospital nurse.

" 'Nursing,' she said, 'is a very special profession. There is something noble about such a calling. It is indeed a holy mission. And although one must work hard, it is an honour to belong to such a profession.' Toki felt that this was quite true, and at once undertook to work in a hospital.

"It was not a very large hospital, so there were not many patients, and between them and the staff, which was also small, there was unusual intimacy. Toki's hair was of course still very short, and everybody thought that she had made it so for coquettish reasons, so she was at once nicknamed *Moga*.[1] This nickname was used even to her ever-smiling face, and very soon familiar remarks were added, for the usual discipline of a hospital was not in evidence here at all. The familiar remarks gave way to solicitations; the solicitations to obscenities. It hadn't taken

[1] A truncated Japanese form of *modan garu, i.e.* "modern girl."

her long to discover that all the patients were there to be cured of venereal diseases. Without having any idea as to what might become of her, she repeatedly urged the superintendent, or doctor in charge, to let her go; but it seemed that she had previously signed some sort of contract, though she was not aware of having done so. They told her that if she ran away she would be brought back, but that they would allow her to go after six months. She stayed there for six months, during which one of her patients died of general paralysis of the insane.

"About a week before she was due to go, she happened one evening when off duty to be walking in a park, not far away, when she luckily met a man she knew and liked, a distant and friendly connection of her family. To him she described her situation, begging him to find for her another more tolerable, or at least to put her in the way of finding one. The face of her cousin (as she called him) was gloomy, but not unkind. His forehead was full of wrinkles, for he was a journalist by profession, and no stranger to domestic anxieties. His wife was consumptive, he said, and they were now living at Hiratsuka, and kept one servant. He suggested to Toki that she should come and look after his wife, be a companion to her and cheer her up a bit. His manner was agreeable, and his offer was made in kindness and sincerity, and although he warned her that she could expect neither money nor joy, she accepted the place with eagerness, and at once went there on leaving the hospital.

"Her cousin the journalist was nearly always away on business, so his wife, except for the servant, was

much alone, for she had neither friends nor relations. The grass mats in the house were in places discoloured by blood, especially in one room, where the lady, whose malady was in an advanced stage, spent much of her time. Her wasted frame and haggard face, a ruin of loveliness, at once aroused the sympathies of Toki, who became a devoted attendant, an attendant to whom the unfortunate woman, knowing she must soon die, confided nearly all her thoughts. Those were not happy days; and the woman and the girl, as time went on, were nearly always alone, for the servant was apparently unpaid, and came in much less often now that Toki undertook so much of the work of the house.

"The slowly-dying woman would sit talking, always in the same strain, smiling wanly as if to excuse the absolute hopelessness and nihilism of her words; in the middle of her smiling desolation she would frown, her whole face would contract in an agonised expression, and vainly clapping to her mouth a thin white hand she would be shaken, shaken, wrenched almost to death, with a protracted and harrowing spasm, that Toki was powerless to alleviate. The invalid had a habit of sitting in the dark, as electric light, she said, hurt her; and another habit of caressing a cat with mottled fur that seemed dear to her. Toki had an instinctive and superstitious dread of cats, but in any case the whole situation would be enough to affect anybody's nerves.

"Directly a moment came when the sun or moon was shining, when there was no wind or special cause for anxiety, when there was an air of gaiety

or a silence with flowers, with the chirp of a bird or summery vibrations of insects; or if they were watching a globe with various goldfish; directly a moment came of bright peace, it was false, pain burst out, and all was spattered and stained. The end came soon.

"A breezy spring afternoon, about the time when the cherry trees are covered with flowers, Toki in the garden heard her name faintly cried. She ran in and found the poor woman in agony in the bath-room. She did what she could, and then hurried to fetch the doctor, who was away. She ran back. In the evening the woman died, choked by her own breath. It was already getting late when Toki found herself alone with the dead body. She hunted for her purse, and at once went to the post office to send a telegram to the absent husband. Unfortunately she couldn't remember exactly which newspaper he was working on. She knew it was one of two, and sent the telegram to the wrong one, after which she was burdened with the suspicion that she might have done so. The husband was not destined to return that night.

"By the time the girl got back to the house it was pretty dark and the wind was rising. A *mokuren*[1] tree at the gate, now still leafless, but full of winged white flowers, looked, she said, as if a whole flock of birds had waveringly settled on it, and were about to fly away again. Just then she remembered that she hadn't seen the cat all day. Where was it? She dreaded to open the door and go in. But of course she was still half expecting that the journalist would return. It never occurred to her to try and get some-

[1] The lily-flowered magnolia.

body else to help her—besides, whom did she know that would do so? She went in and shut the door, her ears full of the wailing wind and her mind (more than her mind—her whole being) full of thoughts of the cat and the corpse. Everybody knows it is unlucky for these two things to be found together. She didn't know which to fear most. Was the cat inside the house or out? She had a firm idea that it must be inside, and although she dreaded now to open the sliding paper doors of the room where the dead woman lay, she forced herself to look and see if the cat was there. It wasn't; so she closed the room again carefully.

"Toki herself couldn't tell me at all what she really felt that night, but she must have been near to madness. She's a funny girl at the best of times. Which was more terrible, she considered, to have a light in her room or to have none? At all events, she had to put her head tight under the bedclothes, though nothing could drown the fitful screaming of the wind outside. She kept on thinking that she heard the husband at the door—the dead woman moving—the cat stealthily prowling. And she couldn't help thinking of that tree (which had been so gay and scented in the morning sun, *that* morning, as far away as a dream) so near to her in the dark, a whole flock of ghostly birds, spirits of the dead, glimmering, fluttering, trying to fly away all together, but somehow failing, and still clinging all together on the bare and waving windy twigs.

"And then she heard a voice. Distinctly. A high voice. A cat's? A woman's? A ghost's? It was outside the house. It was inside the house? It was continually wailing. It didn't want to be let in. A

sound she had never heard before, nor could ever hear again. It knew the woman was dead. Toki was afraid to listen to it, afraid to get up and let it in, afraid to be alive. But she couldn't stand the sound. She got up, prepared to pass through two dark rooms to the door to let it in. When she got up the sound ceased. Still she went bravely forward. She was afraid to go back. When she came to the entrance she saw the cat's eyes shining in the dark. It had been inside the house all the time.

"She shrieked and shrieked, but there was nobody to hear her. . . .

V

"THESE peasants are too superstitious! In the morning she was afraid to get up, and didn't move until she heard a loud daylight knocking. It was the grocer's boy who had come as usual to the back door for orders. Trembling, she sent him to fetch the servant, who had been away for days. Then the husband appeared or was sent for and the house filled with people and light and air. The wind, the cat, the tree and the corpse are all alive in her heart to this day.

"The husband had thought himself fully prepared for the woman's death, but now it affected him more profoundly than an unexpected shock could have done. Only three people went with him to the funeral—a friend of his, Toki and the servant. It was a warm sunny day, and Toki's mind was full of the misery of that broken woman, who had seared her heart with the confession of her loneliness, her meaningless existence, her lack of parents, brothers, sisters, friends, her utter resentful hopelessness. And the feeling which now took possession of Toki was one of limitless inescapable futility, the inanity of living, the dullness of dying. She no longer cared for anything. She missed nothing, wanted nothing, feared nothing, hated nothing. Until at last there rushed into this vacuum the desire to die. She prepared to leave the house, and the journalist was too self-absorbed even to ask her where she was going. She got into a train for Oda-

wara. Why Odawara? Because she had once been there as a child, on some school excursion. She knew what it was like.

"On the evening of the same day as the funeral she was walking on the beach at Odawara. The weather of the morning was fulfilling its promise, and a tranquil moon lit a cloudless sky and a calm sea, the sound of whose ripples came occasionally to the ear like sighs of contentment. She sat down. An elderly woman approached her.

" 'I beg your pardon, but I wonder what you're doing here?'

" 'I came here to-day,' Toki was prepared to lie without any hesitation, 'to visit my relations, but their house has been moved—they've gone away.'

" 'Where are you going to stay, then, to-night?'

" 'I'm not sure. Can you—can you tell me of a suitable hotel?'

" 'I can't; for I think there's no hotel would admit a young girl like you alone.'

" 'Oh.'

" 'But if you like I'll be pleased to find you a room. I know a nice house near here that belongs to my friend, who will, I'm sure, give you a secure lodging for to-night. Won't you come with me now? It's getting late. How bright the moon is!'

"Toki went with her, and occupied a room as suggested at a very respectable house near the shore. The family went to bed early, and at about eleven Toki slipped out of the house and went on to the beach. A perfect spring night: but how fatal is spring to the young!

"The moon was now in quite a different part of the sky, but the sea was as calm as before. She looked

carefully round her. There was no movement at all, except that in a distant house a light disappeared. After it had been put out she thought how yellow it had been. She turned to the sea, easily undulating, dusky, hazy, lazy, indifferent, peaceful, powerful. It was much warmer than she expected, and she waded out. When the water was up to her shoulders she paused, thinking she heard something, and then, satisfied, groped forward in the waiting ocean. She wanted to sink; the more she wanted to sink, the more she found herself swimming. She couldn't help swimming. She tried to swallow some water and spat it out again. But her clothes began to be heavy and dragging. She had now no will either to strike out or to sink. She rolled over on her side. The water closed over her head, but she came up again. This happened twice. Then she was fighting like a wild beast. Her body felt as if it would burst in two, her brain was full of cold and fiery salt, a hot and universal roaring filled her ears; but into that roaring came a quieter tune, and dreamily she seemed to be going, going down, down, to nameless oblivion, to perfect peace. . . .

"She is not clear whether it was a watchman or a fisherman who saved her, for when she became at all conscious again she was lying in a hospital. Faces were staring at her. For a long time they meant nothing. And then she realised that they must be the faces of drowned men at the bottom of the sea. But could that be right? Surely they were not resolving themselves into a look of expectancy. Under the sea? They were like words, whose meaning was a series of questions, in an unknown language.

"No one had yet identified her, but a doctor in

a white overall, and a policeman with a sword at his hip and white cotton gloves on his hands, were now doing their best to find out who she was. At first, feeling in her very bowels the growing rebirth of fear, she pretended not to understand; and when the men pressed her for an answer, tightly shut her lips; and when they hung over her, persistent and threatening, she sobbed without weeping. But the policeman knew his duty, and as soon as she could stand she was marched off to the nearest police-box, where she stood, her heart wildly palpitating from fear and exhaustion, and her head sunk on her breast. She has described to me at length the combined efforts of three policemen cajoling, persuading, threatening, to force from her the name and address of her parents. I am surprised, for I have always found policemen so kind. Perhaps they really thought she was the escaped concubine of an eminent official (judging from the questions they asked her), or perhaps it was simply that they had nothing else to do: when men are idle they get so awfully cruel. Toki held out as long as she could, but at last there was no hope for it; and so she thought of a stratagem.

" 'If,' she said, 'you'll promise on your words of honour not to communicate it to anybody at all on any pretext, then I'll tell you where my home is.'

"They all promised.

" 'I don't believe you,' she said, 'you're deceiving me.'

"They protested their good faith, but she laughed. At this they solemnly undertook to convince her that they wouldn't under any circumstances betray her, but that in accordance with their duty they were bound to find out where she lived, and asserted

that if they failed in this they would be severely punished.

"She told them.

"One of them laughed.

"She stared, as if bewildered.

"They at once sent a telegram to her family.

"This time her mother and brother fetched her home, after many bows, smiles, thanks and apologies to the policemen, begging them to excuse the behaviour of an insane girl. On the journey, she says, they treated her as a lunatic, but at home she was treated as a criminal.

"She managed to escape for the third time; and with the aid of her relation, the journalist, now of course a widower, she got a place with me, and I have done my best to treat her kindly. Before I end this writing I ought to mention two trifling episodes of her childhood, which, she says, have impressed her more than anything that has since happened in her life. They must have influenced her character. I wonder, by the way, what she thinks of people generally? She swore to me that she would never marry. Stupid thing!

"The first anecdote is this. When she was at the primary school in her native place she was in the same class as a certain little girl who was the daughter of one of the richest and most influential men in the neighbourhood. This child was accordingly a great favourite with the teachers, but Toki asserts that her character was not estimable. For some unknown reason the child hated Toki and was always trying to score off her. Now it happened that this little girl possessed a certain gaudy pencil-box, the gift of her father and the envy of her school-

fellows. This object she put secretly into Toki's school bag, or satchel, with the eventual result that Toki was unjustly held up to the local world as a thief.

"It is unlucky to tell stories about fortune-tellers, but the other story shows how even when a child she had begun to be ridiculously superstitious. One day, returning from school, she stopped to listen to some quack fortune-teller in the street. This personage was impressively warning his audience that if in any of their houses the W.C.[1] was built at the south-western corner, it was a positive indication that one of the inhabitants of such a house would certainly become a raving lunatic. Toki knew at once that her own home was built like that: perhaps she may again try to do way with herself, for, she says, she is still afraid of becoming. . . ."

[1] [The English reader is asked to forgive this second unpoetical reference, on the ground that in Japan these things are taken more as a matter of course.]

VI

[THERE the manuscript abruptly ends, and when I asked its author to continue it she said she was unwilling to do so, nor did she tell me how she had originally proposed to end it. The reader may have noticed above that Captain S., the lady's husband, removed, as a result of his drunken jealousy and impulsive and brutal stupidity, his whole family to a distant part of the country, Oita in Kyushu. Toki wouldn't go with them, saying she preferred to stay in Tokyo. Perhaps she felt that in the capital there would always be more security, more chance to hide or escape when necessary. Madame S. managed to find her a place with a youngish couple, who happened to be among my best Japanese friends, and in their house I occasionally saw her. After some time they lent me rooms, into which I gladly moved, and it was while there that a small incident occurred, which I may as well record briefly here, by way of an end-piece. When I had been in the house a couple of months my friends happened to go away for a week, so that I was alone in the house with Toki. She was a good servant, quiet and fairly thorough, though inclined to be forgetful, and, out of pure thoughtlessness, a bit of a mischief-maker. It was in the early summer and I was just getting over a slight attack of 'flu. Although the morning was bright and warm, I decided to stay in bed, for I still had a touch of fever. My bed, being a Japanese one, was on the floor, and the house and weather being both delightfully Japanese, I had opened the whole end of the room to the sunny air which filled the garden outside. I had been lying on my stomach and reading the poems of Mangan, but I put the book down and gazed up at the perfect sky, and listened dreamily to the faint fresh humming of new-born insects, when I suddenly became aware of a man standing just in front of me. My pillow was only six feet from the garden where he stood. He must have come in

at the little garden gate, which was unusual, but I supposed he was some old pedlar who had come in that way by-mistake-on-purpose to avoid the servant, and perhaps to get round the master. Yet he was a bit too neatly dressed for a pedlar. He was not a very attractive old man. He stood with his hat in his hand, and I saw that his round head, bald in places, was covered with short white bristly down, and looked like the swollen breast of some unpleasant bird. His head he carried rather forward, for he had a slight stoop, and a U-neck, of which the skin was dry and mottled. His face was small, not an open face, and with no prominent feature. Eyebrows he lacked, but the place where they ought to have been was raised enquiringly, and the gaze of his pale eyes was fixed on me above a pair of old-fashioned spectacles, which had permanently slipped down, for like most Japanese he had no bridge to his nose. His mouth was curiously small, half open, looked as if it had never smiled, and disclosed regular rodent teeth.

This inglorious picture was not, I venture to assert, the figment of an invalid fancy. It definitely was a small, dry old man who was not pleasant. I was just going to tell him that there was nothing to-day, thank you, when he opened a little covered Red Riding Hood basket and took out a slip of paper, which he handed to me with the sort of hand you'd expect a man like that to have—a close-fisted man. Poor beggar, I thought, being an experienced pauper myself, I don't blame him for *that*: money's certainly scarce enough. I can't read much of the Japanese script, but I was able to make out on this bit of paper the name of my absent host.

"Yes," I said, "he lives here. Did you want to see him? He's away now."

I thought the old man was dunning for some forgotten bill to be paid. He then asked me what seemed an unnecessary question, scrutinising me closely:

"Does anybody else live here?"

I was just going to say "Yes, I do," when I changed my mind and thought I'd call the servant to come and get rid of him, for I didn't feel well enough to go on being civil to this tedious old creature: I listened for Toki, thinking she was in the next room or in the kitchen beyond. In a paper house sound travels, but nothing could I hear just then. No doubt she had gone out shopping—it was no use calling. I turned

to the old man again, wondering how to get rid of him, and thought of a good plan.

"I'm sorry," I said, smiling politely, "I don't understand."

He then asked several more questions which, instead of answering, I met with as blank a look as I could command, and the old man, bowing and muttering, put down his basket and hat and went next door, where I heard him asking his questions again. Old devil, I thought.

Just then the sliding paper door of my room opened, and there stood Toki.

"My father!" she whispered, and dived into the large wall-cupboard behind me (in which the beds are usually kept) just as the old man returned with the woman from next door.

A nice position for me! At my head a furious parent, and at my feet—if he only knew it—his trembling child. I was at a disadvantage. I was a foreigner. I had to be polite. I had to act my part. My temperature was 38.8°. The two submitted me at once to a volley of leading questions, both leaning forward and trying to read my thoughts by outstaring me.

"I don't understand," I protested with a smile and a shrug.

"Where is the servant who works here?" they demanded.

"Ah! the servant!" I said brightly. "She's away just now."

"Where is she?"

"I don't know."

"When will she be back?"

"I don't know."

They exchanged significant looks. "How can you cook your meals without a servant?" they asked.

"I don't understand," I said. But they wouldn't leave the question. They repeated in all possible forms, with various antics, until only a moron could have failed to understand.

"Ah, so?" I said sweetly. "Well, I look after myself when there's nobody to look after me."

It was obvious that they didn't believe a word I said.

And now, while the old man went on with his cross-questioning, the woman left him, and I could hear her going round outside, peeping and poking into every room. If I

made the slightest protest they would at once be positive of what they now strongly suspected—that I was hiding the girl. As the woman came back she stumbled over something, and plucked the old man's sleeve.

"Look!" she muttered, and they both looked down. "Her clogs."

Toki had left her clogs just outside! The most damning evidence.

"If you come back next Wednesday," I said, "somebody may be here."

That would give me time to get her out of the way. . . . They both smiled scornfully, looking over my shoulder, to the right, to the left——

"This gentleman," the woman explained, "would like to wait here a little longer, in case the girl *returns*."

"Certainly," I said, "please do."

She left him, and he made himself somewhat at home, but instead of sitting down before me, he craftily moved, with an affectation of courtesy, along to the other end of the garden front of the house, and there sliding back a door, sat down with his feet in the garden and his head in the house, and in such a position that he had a commanding view of the four main rooms, including my own, and could hear the footfall of a mouse in any one of them.

The sun was now high in the sky, the dew on the leaves was all gone and a drowsy silence ensued: but silence was the last thing I wanted, for the girl might think the coast was clear and burst out at any moment! I coughed meaningly, but my cough might have meant "Come out," so I didn't do it again. Leaning far forward, I was in time to see the old man leaning far back and twisting his neck to peer into an inner room where a lot of Toki's sewing and odds and ends were scattered on the floor. He must have known that she was in the house. What I really feared was that he would come in and start looking in the cupboards. Then I couldn't exactly stop in, because it would show that I had something to hide. And in this most awkward of silences the girl might so easily emerge. . . . At last I could stand it no longer.

"I'm sorry," I said, "but I have to go out very soon. Won't you come back on Wednesday?"

I got up giddily, pulled on some clothes and started sliding the various doors together and closing everything.

"The servant here," he said meaningly, grasping his wicker basket, "is my daughter."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Is she really? Fancy! What a pity she isn't here to-day! Well, good-bye—I'm sorry your visit was useless—good-bye."

I bowed him out and closed all the doors. When he had gone, I let the girl out. She thanked me, and then stood for quite a minute, her hands hanging limply at her side, her head down, not moving, and one of the most shocking expressions on her baby face that I think I have ever seen on the face of a human being. She seemed like an animal which, after struggling endless hours in a trap, after giving up all hope and being paralysed with raw terror, after being slowly frozen into madness, is suddenly set free; and has no feeling except an organic certainty that its liberty is somehow worse than its captivity.

Just for one moment she looked like that, and then lifted her head—with the smile restored to the baby face. It was very moving. She submitted to these events without any comment, for she was submissive; and soon started talking again quickly and gaily. She said she would rather die than speak to her father. And yet I must say that some time later the old man wrote, hoping for a reconciliation: was the father in him restored, or had he some scheme? She of course refused unconditionally. What can they have done to her at home? How mysterious and terrible are the relations between parents and children, and how little we know about them! And yet whenever she spoke about her home she used to smile. It was only then that I fully understood the words of Madame S. when she wrote: "Toki can feel fear very deeply, but it is impossible for a nature like hers to be angry."]

PART III

YOKA NIKKI:

AN EIGHT-DAY DIARY

THE FIRST DAY

I TRAVELLED with N. He was surprised at such an eccentricity as to change one's destination suddenly (partly in order to escape the excessive heat and the crowds at Véno), especially because the change involved a sea crossing, but a little unexpectedness being a good medicine we caught the train and squeezed ourselves into a third-class carriage. It is not comfortable because I am taller than the Japanese. I must sit bolt upright all the time, the seats are as narrow as bookshelves, and there is nowhere to put my legs. But in spite of these drawbacks the people are sometimes more interesting than those in the second class.

As the train went through the Kwanto plain, where there are so many paulownia trees, the heat increased, and at every station some of the passengers bought ices, but many bought lumps of ice wrapped in bamboo bark, and putting them in their mouths, ate them as if they were a kind of crystal biscuit. Seeing people eating lumps of raw ice gave me, instead of a sensation of sympathetic coolness, one of pain, for the sound was like the crunching of glass.

In the evening there was rain and the air got cooler. Knee to knee with us an interesting couple sat on the opposite bookshelf. They were not man and wife, nor lovers, nor brother and sister. Plainly but little acquainted, they spoke to each other rather

formally, but his manner seemed not entirely without a touch of gallantry, and she was plainly determined to please. Her coyness, however, was a trifle comic, for her face was long, a bit horsish, and her smile was too whimsical, though of course unintentionally so. She was the possessor of an air cushion, which very often became deflated, and when she blew it up her pursed lips and arched eyebrows made her look positively bizarre.

The man was a jolly, fat, unthinking fellow, and repeatedly pulling out a bottle of *saké,* he drank from a cup that unscrewed from the top of it. The drink may have warmed his heart, but it didn't send him to sleep. He kept on changing his position, and as soon as he dozed, moved again. At last, after trying a dozen positions, he arranged himself with one arm along the back of the seat. When he became drowsy this arm slipped an inch or two, and often abruptly descended on the aquiline back of his lady friend with a thump that could be heard. She woke up each time with a jump, her eyebrows ready for the crack of doom. He was too muzzy for apologies and she too sleepy for resentment. When we came near his station at two o'clock in the morning she woke him up, and with some ceremony he departed. Having now a whole seat to herself, she blew up her air cushion and spread herself out. Unlike us, she managed to have a good sleep.

THE SECOND DAY

VERY early in the half-light of the cloudy morning I saw a troop of horses bounding on a wet moor and tossing their manes, a sight you could hardly see in the south, and soon we got to Aomori, where there is a big waiting-room always full of people, like the souls of the dead ready for inspection, or parcels waiting for the post.

The passage across the Tsugaru Channel to the northern island takes four or five hours. At first, still in the bay, the sea is calm, and everybody looks cheerful and admires the dark-blue wooded headlands and in the distance the sun shining on the sea, but later stewards appear with basins and the mats in the general cabin are covered with prostrate forms. To be sea-sick is to be in good historical company. To be sea-sick needn't even deter one from a life on the rolling wave, for I've heard of a man in the navy who, though he could hardly stand between one continent and another, actually rose to the rank of admiral. He should have had his portrait done in the heroic manner, a map on the wall, a telescope under the arm, a naval victory (all ships of the line and puffs of smoke) visible at the back beyond a pillar and curtain, and a lily-white hand toying, like a connoisseur's, with a Delft basin. It is easy to be funny after the event. For me this was a morning of ginger ale laced with brandy. No roaring ocean could disturb

N., an amiable travelling companion, who seems to lack two common Japanese faults—that nervous, meaningless, irritating, hysterical laugh; and the love of secrecy, intrigue and hocus-pocus.

Hakodaté appeared in a mist of rain. It looked very foreign from the sea. We went at once to Yunokawa, where we found a quiet inn with a hot spring. The water was clear, the bath lined with blue tiles, and we sat in it and watched the cold rain trickling down the windows while the sweat trickled off our faces. These hot springs everywhere are one of the real achievements of Japanese civilisation. Permanent hot water, coming out of the ground with a tang of salt and sulphur, coming out of the earth into a tiled bathroom, while the first flakes of snow sail past the window like lost insects—it is enough. I could write a book about all the springs I have been in; all the celebrities I have met in the bath (I once bowed from the water to a dignitary in a frock coat); anecdotes of the bath; how I once bathed as quickly as a crow; how conversation once delayed me for three hours in a very hot bath (whence certain persons inferred that such a time is usual for foreigners); how a man refused to enter the bath until he had ascertained if I were English or American (a minor echo of the Californian immigration hubbub); how another man heats a greenhouse with natural hot water and eats strawberries in January; and of the excellent effects of these waters on the nerves and insides of both sexes.

The maid at the inn was rural without being rustic. She told us that the diplomatic representative of a certain foreign country was staying at present

under this same roof, and repeated the very naïve propaganda he had spoken to her.

On the wall outside the bathroom were some photographs, and a map of Hakodaté. The photographs were of a Trappist monastery not far off, where they cultivate the virtue of silence and make excellent cheese. The map was a neat piece of work, printed in clean colours and showing pictures of the activities of the town. Here was a factory, here a park, here a bathing place, here a vision of a Henry Fordian industrial paradise of the future, here the street of old-clothes dealers and here the gaudy-painted head of a girl with yellow pins in her hair. This stood for the "licensed quarters," and put me in mind of some verses of the poet Henley on an old Japanese print: in which, whatever his virtues elsewhere, he displays a blissful ignorance, and a quality that Whistler sublimely called "the facility of the incompetent." The only European poet I can think of who ever wrote good poems about Japan is Heredia. His superb *Samourai* and *Daimio* are of somewhat more credit to Europe than the *Mikado*. Nevertheless I am a fervent admirer of Gilbert.

That night it rained and got cold, so we went into a café near the station and ordered whisky. What they brought must have been benzine, for, on the application of a match, it burnt with a loud blue flame, so we drank tea instead—or was it coffee? One could only think of it as juice squeezed out by the impact of an alien civilisation. We caught a late train for the north.

THE THIRD DAY

THE country we saw in the morning was something quite new. If Hokkaido is not exactly between Siberia and Alaska, let me say it is between Korea and Canada, and assert that it has traces of them all. It is quite different to the rest of Japan. Great fields of maize, pumpkins and glittering buckwheat; forests, pastures and plains; rows of poplar trees and a different air; river valleys full of stones and evening primrose. Here, too, the houses are built differently, for they have to stand a different winter, a desperate winter. Already the lustre of summer is dying in the leaves, the train turns, and this is the port of Otaru, full of ships and grey mist, almost as cheerless as Saghalien. The train runs at the very edge of a sad northern sea haunted by boreal voices and heaving with a slow sub-arctic calm.

After two hours N. and I come out of the huge drab wooden station at Sapporo, the captial. This building is like a Russian country house of the old régime or an old-fashioned middle school in the south. Sapporo is unlike any other town in Japan, because the streets are wide. It must be one of the most provincial places in the world. The trams saunter under the acacias like old men out for an airing, grass grows in the tram lines and red tape lichens life all over. A paradise for an exiled bureaucrat; but the only good lawn in Japan can be found in

the botanical garden. It is shaded by some splendid trees, some fine elms and many japonic varieties of trees familiar in other countries; for instance, this *euonymus:* its cousin, *europaeus,* the spindle tree, is "the fruit that in our autumn woodlands seems a flower," and at once I remember it trembling in a Berkshire lane ten years ago.

We ate two meals in Sapporo. At breakfast a fat painted maid sleepily took our orders. Her dullness amounted almost to genius, and she always answered yes. While we were eating she was at the telephone.

"Hullo," she said, "yes . . . yes . . . yes . . . yes," and finally, "yes." I believe if one had said to her, "Are you a dull fool?" she would have answered without emotion in the affirmative. If one is going to say yes to everything one might just as well enter a Trappist monastery and make cheese.

At lunch-time we found in the middle of the town a building with a showy plaster front, two stories and a gable. It was said to be a restaurant. We passed through a large room full of tables covered with dirty tablecloths on which there were bottles of imitation Worcestershire sauce over one of which the proprietress, a crafty shrew, was talking business with two crapulous men; and so down a passage to a smaller room which was open on one side to a courtyard. Such a courtyard, like a South American *patio,* is often to be found in Japanese houses of the older type, and their chief charm is that they are scrupulously kept, every leaf in place, every shadow significant. But this garden was a misfortune. From a large pine tree in the middle hung a dead brown branch. It was hardly reflected in a pool of slime over

which mosquitoes hovered at noon, and on which floated dead matches, stray feathers and cigarette ends. The plants and bushes were dusty and overgrown, and among them lay an empty jam tin and a toothless comb. It was very depressing, in a country so celebrated for its landscape gardens.

The room itself was little better. It contained two dirty tables on a linoleum floor, and the walls had suffered from damp. There was an air of last year's debauchery. After a long time a woman appeared. She was carefully made up, and looked first at me, then at N., then back at me again, with an expression of shrewd calculation. I couldn't help admiring the fact that in the twinkling of an eye she had realised why we had come (for this was not only a restaurant) and what we were worth. I ought to mention that N. and I both dress badly when we travel. We ate a strange and expensive meal, not free from tinned asparagus and a vase of toothpicks. "Foreign cooking";—foreign, as somebody has remarked, to every country but Japan.

At this moment, while I happened to be looking upwards through the pine tree, I caught sight of somebody opening the first floor wooden shutters on the side of the courtyard which was in shadow. They ought to have been opened at cockcrow, and now it was after noon. A white hand slid them back, and a woman with her hair down appeared with a looking-glass. She didn't know that she was being watched. She spent a long time fingering her eyebrows. Although she looked tired and raffish she was remarkably graceful. At last she turned to answer a man's voice from within the room, and from the tone

of her reply I supposed it must be love that gave a bloom to her unpowdered, overslept face. When she turned outwards again to her mirror she saw me watching her. She stared back with interest, and the last time I looked she was dreamily leaning on the balcony railing, her arms white, her hair dressed and a cigarette in her pointed fingers.

We took a train on a private railway, meaning that evening to reach Noboribetsu. From the window women could be seen working in the fields with flails, a mixture of sweat and archaic poetry. The Japanese are hard-working and intensive farmers, but I am told they waste a lot of energy in various ways. I can well believe it, because their methods are quite primitive. Outside Tokyo they seem to take crop after crop off the same field unceasingly, and as soon as a crop is cut the leaves of the next are already higher than the stubble.

We passed through a forest and then ran into rain. Three views I remember particularly. A reedy bog under lowering clouds, with dead birch trees sticking up like white bones, a leafy undergrowth and a column of steam rising from a solfatara hidden in a wood. An enormous paper factory like a town, full of roaring lights and shining wheels, in a plain empty except for one old cow and a row of telegraph wires disappearing in the rain. Finally, a tundra giving way to a darkening flat sea-coast, a long horizontal line of troubled grey sea beyond the black land and some lonely huts.

To reach Noboribetsu one changes into a tram that climbs the hills. It was very dark and pouring with rain when we arrived. A crowd of hotel men

came forward with paper lanterns, and in ten minutes we were given up to light, warmth, bath, supper and bed.

The hotel contained a ping-pong table, and we played in turns with some students and young women. As I turned to pick up a ball I was surprised to see an American watching me. A student asked him if he understood Esperanto. He said he didn't, guffawed, and remarked to me that people in Japan only study Esperanto because of a prejudice against English. The next day I met him in the bath and dissected his character under a barrage of platitudes. I often do this when I am analysing people. It's very effective. It's also good to agree with everything said by fools or people you dislike (it comes to the same thing), then while they are trying to take umbrage you can take notes.

There, that's the worst of a diary. So many cats get out of the bag.

THE FOURTH DAY

In the morning we woke to hear crows talking in the rain, which was so heavy that we couldn't go out, and spent much time in the bath. There were a number of men and women in it. I like to see Japanese women nude, especially when their hair is dressed in their own fashion, like a voluted helmet of black lacquer.

There are some warm cataracts (in these open-air bathrooms) that fall ten feet upon the spine with a thumping massage that gives one new nerves, blood and brains; or sitting in the steaming tonic water one can voluptuously watch the rain dripping from the leaves of the chestnut trees.

Later the weather cleared enough for us to visit the crater. Wearing light cotton coats and wooden sandals and carrying oiled-paper umbrellas, we immediately found ourselves under a crumbling scarlet cliff crowned with woods, the crater itself being full of mounds of sinter, white, but streaked with grey, purple and yellow, and cloudy with steam. Everywhere among the chalky and silicic hills in this hollow are loud murmurs of underground anger, and from these grey boiling pools and unlighted caves, caked with greenish sulphur, the water of those delightful baths emerges. Sullen bubbles break with burning and viscous indifference from the very ground at your feet.

Not long ago I was at Beppu, which is somewhat the same. There one boils one's kettle by putting it out in the garden, over a hole as big as your eye. I should never feel quite at ease in these places where the ground is so noisy. At Beppu the other day a pillar of boiling water stood up unexpectedly in the air a few days ago and killed a child. That is the way of God to man.

Returning to the bath, I suddenly feel that I should be afraid to see the moon to-night, but there is no need to fear, for the rain is sweeping in again from the sea, and the homely crows, so many, so tame, so human and so grotesque, complain as they drip. But why is it that I feel so uneasy? I cannot now forget, although this is not the time to remember:

> And whiter grows the foam,
> The small moon lightens more;
> And as I turn me home,
> My shadow walks before.

We are apt to forget that the zodiac revolves in our heads. At the moment, with an unknown fear running under my ribs like a lizard, no doubt I am the victim of some starry influence.

THE FIFTH DAY

THE people at the inn are flowers of Japanese peasantry, with the charm of nature and the manners of a thousand years ago. They say good-bye to us with their foreheads on the floor. Who am I that people should do that to me? I am not even rich. Yet they do the same to everybody else. As we go, I notice there is moss, cushiony on the stones in the garden. What a strange world!

We get out of the train this morning at Shiraoi in bright sunshine that is neither warm nor cold. It is a long, vague, Siberian-looking village. The roads are very wide, cinder-grey and empty of traffic. The low wooden houses, built to stand the cold from October to April, have weathered to a very dark grey. There are even no telegraph poles; a few tall, transient, glossy weeds of late summer wave rankly in the sea-wind on a waste place; and there are one or two short oak trees, fresh to the eye, so large the wavy-edged leaves and so small the frame.

I confess to N. that I am feeling ashamed, for we have come to this place with motives as low as any tourist's—to see the Ainu, the supposed aboriginal inhabitants of Japan, some of whom survive in this place. But are we to go and knock at their doors and ask if we can stare at them? It is true that a few female missionaries come here with kodaks and a patronising smile (I have at last discovered what

these almost mythological ladies look like, for I saw some last month bathing at Lake Nojiri—their faces were quite nude, for they had taken off their spectacles; the water made them feel so skittish that they bobbed up and down in it; they wore shiny bathing-caps of bluish rubber; and each time they rose out of the water a little of it had collected in the hollows behind their collar-bones); some scientists; and a few of the tourists who like to say they have been "off the beaten track." There was once a Savage Landor who wrote a book called *Alone with the Hairy Ainu*. That is no excuse for us.

"Let's try and look as if we'd come here for something else," I suggest to N., "and if we see no Ainu we'll go back at once to the station and get the next train."

N. agrees with me that of course one can't go and gape at people in their own homes. But at this moment a very short snub-nosed boy of fourteen or so with very dark eye-lashes comes up shyly and offers himself as a guide. And almost at once it appears that he himself is an Ainu. He guides us.

An old man in a gown is working in a scanty garden. Above the reedy roof of his house the blue sky is brilliant with rapidly moving storm clouds, and among them the sun lights the volcano Tarumai. Its summit is square and rocky, and from it streams horizontally a very long, pure-white, busy pennant of steam. At every moment always on the pumice slopes the colours and shadows change. Mountains are moody. Think of Tarumai in the silence of the snow, or with dry thunder crying in the crags. Sometimes it is brownish, and a single zigzag of mauve lightning appears on its flank. Think of certain

spring mornings: the sun is brighter than its warmth; the birch trees are all alive with the dews of dispersing mist; a bear ambles across the glade; a lark is rising upwards and outwards. So far from noting its unpremeditated art the Ainu call it "the bird that argues with God." Well, we're all birds that argue with God, but our polemics lack so many desirable qualities.

The old man turns, leaning on his hoe. He is not utterly unlike Tolstoi. What is the good of calling him Caucasian and dolichocephalic, of measuring his jaw and snub nose and of observing that he is hairier than an egg? I have the profoundest respect for science, but no craniometer can be fitted to the fact that he has a voice plaintive beyond tragedy, the fading and irrecoverable mildness of a savage. He rehearses gravely a ceremony of his ancestors, and strokes his venerable white beard. His eyes are almost closed, and a slow shudder runs through him. He pronounces the name of his race almost as three distinct syllables, and his voice is fetched, small, from far away, from another world. Here are the arrows and harpoons of his youth, devices simple and cunning. Within living memory the Ainu have reaped their crops with mussel shells.

The women, when they marry, tatto blue moustaches on their faces. One of them now fetches out and puts on with much labour a traditional robe of woven bark-cloth, covered with Aztec patterns, then round her neck glass and carnelian marbles on a thread of fish-gut suspending a silver medallion as big as a saucer. Smiling whimsically under her Wilhelm II. moustache, she performs a few steps of the sacred bear-dance. Memory corroborates her

faltering corroboree. Finally she gives us a glass of water, we give her a coin, and the sky is a great orchestra of convex gleams and clouds unbuilding again.

These older Ainu will soon be dead. As a man asleep has more power over the world than it has over him, they will go out with the power that belongs to the humblest, undefeated by defeat.

At the station our child guide found his sister, a silent gypsy-faced Psyche. The eyes of the Ainu are like wet and haunted moonstones, and their eyelashes are thick and fringy. We should have liked to take these two with us, frankly affectionate, and as exotic as Eskimos. They waved good-bye to us, standing in their dark-grey village. Like life itself, every journey is punctuated with farewells.

Late in the afternoon we took ship from Muroran for Aomori, pushing out in the waves beyond the jagged heights of Volcano Bay. From the rhythmic deck we watched the sun going down. I watch the fading day—how extraordinary that it is not the one he sees!

THE SIXTH DAY

MOTORING through the prefecture of Akita, N. reminds me that here are to be found the most beautiful women in Japan. It is obvious. They talk a thick dialect in Kemanai, but their complexions are as clear as the autumn sky. Even the oldest peasants in the by-ways have a fine skin, fresh and rosy.

The road to Lake Towada from this side stops in the woods on the top of a hill, and from there one walks down. The immense, intense expanse appears blue among the yellowing fans of chestnut trees. The leaves of ash trees and wild vines are tinged even now with red, although this is only the very beginning of September and Tokyo is still in the sweat of summer. Into the peace of leaves and water we descend, meeting nobody on the way, and at the inn at Oidé they give us a twelve-mat room above the garden and the lake, which is more like an arm of the sea, some wide and wooded fjord. It is more than a thousand feet deep, quite calm, and quite impossibly, laughably, blue.

The scenic varieties of the two promontories remind me once more how precisely in Japan nature has adapted itself to the Japanese taste. To a European, when he discovers alive the bright details, the formal gradations and arrangements, all the exact shapes as alive as the strokes of a brush, the poses of insects, the curves of fish, every formula and varia-

tion, every convention of Japanese art—the effect is theatrical.

The guide's voice, louder than the engine of his motor boat, indicates the Grove of Celestial Silence; but also the Islands of Perpetual Youth and of the Mandarin Duck, the Rock of a Thousand Pines and the Cliff of Five Colours. On a flat stone in a secret mossy recess of the rocky, leafy shore two cormorants are sitting like two old men in frock-coats. It is all very well to talk about anthropomorphism, but is there a single extra-human standard by which we may judge anything? Cormorants still sit on rocks.

I like the local story of a giant woodman, Hachinotaro, who came to these parts in the ninth century. He became very thirsty, and was changed into a dragon. He then drank all the water in a stream, and as he was still thirsty this lake was provided for him. At the same time a certain priest, by name Nansobo, who lived in a distant village, was about to make a pilgrimage. During his vigil the deity Gongen appeared, incarnate in human form (gods always have to do something like this, yet even then we seldom recognise them), and gave him a pair of iron sandals to wear on the journey, telling him to stop and live in the place where the sandals should break. In the course of his pilgrimage he came to the lake, and his sandals broke. Ecclesiastical etiquette of course obliged him to approach Hachinotaro, the man-dragon, and to order him to leave the lake. His demand was refused, and after a deadly fight lasting for a week, Nansobo won. But the tale has no happy ending. After years of seclusion and a fast lasting three weeks Nansobo threw himself

from a high rock into the lake, and perished. This story is full of seeds of allegory ready for the warmth of some Buddhistic-Miltonic mind. What a hope!

In the evening, at the inn, as I was returning from the bath, a voice (not that of Gongen) said in English:

"I beg your pardon, but I believe you're English."

A face like a lemming's was peering out of a shadowy doorway.

"You speak as if you'd been in England," I told it. "How long were you there?"

"But I *am* English," said this Japanese plaintively.

He was a choice specimen of a rare bird, a positive dodo of rarity. To meet him was like catching a Camberwell Beauty, or stumbling over a dinosaur's egg—a triumph for any human naturalist. It appeared that he had left Japan in his youth, and had been in business in London for more than twenty years. His hair was cut and brushed like a smart City man's, he had a little speck of a moustache and he was fanatically well groomed. His speech was slipped, his English was just slangy enough, carefully seasoned to taste, and even his voice was studied exactly enough to produce that elusive nuance of a conventional "smart" second-rate Englishman's voice, touched with arrogance, a faint and affected enthusiasm and a hinted discontent, all covered with a sort of sad, short heartiness—the whole thing a mask. I wanted to laugh, but I couldn't.

"Won't you have a cigarette?" he said, holding out a Bond-streetish case. "They're Gold Flakes."

Of course, they would be.

"Now," I said, "what d'you think of your country now you've come back to it?"

"Oh, I don't like it at all," he said, cultivating his English grumble.

"What don't you like?"

"The roads——"

"But the earthquake——"

"Oh, but the *roads*——"

"What else?"

"Oh, but it's not only the roads. It's *everything*. Tokyo, I mean, is perfectly beastly. Those dreadful wires——! First you have the tram wires, then the electric light wires, and then the telegraph wires and the wireless wires, and all the other wires everywhere. There's no excuse——"

At this he looked round, and then said:

"Oh, Lord! There's no bell."

He clapped his hands for a servant. When she appeared he said:

"Come in here—ah—that is, *o hairi!* What will you drink?"

He ordered beer, and then said:

"Ah, for some bitters! Good old bitters!"

And sighed.

"Now this beastly population problem," he began, " is easily explained. The working classes have no parks, no recreations, nothing except work. So of course there's only that one amusement left. You can't blame them, by Jove."

Then he complained of the manners of his fellow-countrymen.

"But the Japanese are always said to be polite," I said.

"*Said* to be," he repeated, and winked. I never saw a Japanese wink, before or since.

He next complained of the government and constitution, which, had we been overheard, would have cost him his all, for in Japan they don't quite appreciate (shall I say "yet?") all our political ideas.

"Do you know," he was saying, "one day I was standing on the steps of the Japanese Club in London, when the porter said: 'Look, sir. There's the King.' And it was the King, right enough. There he was, sitting with the Queen, and being driven in a car like anybody else. No guards, no policemen—all so nice and natural, don't you know. So of course I took off my hat and bowed, and the King took off his hat and bowed. There you are now, that's what I like. Now you could never see that in Japan."

I suggested that one might at least take into account the differences in national religion and character, and so on. Besides, some Japanese think we are too democratic.

"But," I added, "I think the English are just as fond of their royal family as you are."

"Ah, *fond!* That's just the word. We're only afraid."

The policemen were altogether too much for him. English policemen are public servants, but the Japanese public are rather policemen's servants. He was horribly irked at having to take off his hat to these Limbs of Majesty. And so he went on abusively from one subject to another. At last I said:

"Then you think everything in Japan is bad."

"Everything," he said quite seriously.

How can one argue with that?

"Good old Hampstead!" he murmured. "Oh, Lord, how I wish——"

Five years ago he wanted to marry an English girl, but his old mother disapproves of mixed marriages, and insisted on a Japanese wife. I wonder how she likes his point of view? I wonder what his children will hear him say about their country?

Why was he at the lake? Not for pleasure, but business. The scenery was not bad, but, by George, an awful bore. He would rather be back in "good old" Oxford Street.

THE SEVENTH DAY

In the morning he had to leave after breakfast. He went out early for a stroll in the garden, one hand behind his back, the other leaning on a discreet stick. He must have watched and imitated some old retired general, some crimson rambler in a garden of Bournemouth of Cheltenham. . . .

"A fine morning."

"Just a touch of autumn in the air," said he.

What a caricature of an Englishman! There was even a Dunhill pipe in the pocket of his grey flannel coat. I didn't tell him he was a bloody fool, so I won't say so here.

N. and I went to Yasumiya on foot. There is a narrow path through the magnificent woods that overhang the lake. We saw a copper pheasant, and many enamelled snakes sunning themselves at the side of the path under splendid sprays of ultramarine monkshood. Suddenly a big fox, which had been drinking at the water's edge, flashed like a meteor across the path and into the undergrowth: his auburn fur kindling in flight, the black tip of his tail vanished. In Japan the fox has a peculiar significance, its elusiveness having made it carry the responsibility of demoniac possession.

A long beach about six feet wide under dense foliage. The water was so calm that there wasn't even a ripple at the edge, and so clear that the coloured

pebbles at the bottom seemed to be under a magnifying glass. A few transparent shrimps cruised vaguely in the transparent water, and a dark-brown newt with a scarlet belly glided almost vertically up to the surface, treading water, winnowing it with his tiny fingers, and nibbling, nibbling with infinite leisureliness underneath a dead dragon-fly that was floating on the top. There was no sound at all except the sound of peace.

The same day we crossed to the opposite shore, leaving long, dark, oily ripples spreading away from the boat for invisible miles. A single cormorant on the wing.

We land at the outlet to the Oirasé River, whose valley, for ten miles, is a mass of trees, ferns, rocks, rapids and cascades. Some of the waterfalls leap a hundred feet, some spread gliding or drop in changing veils, some tumble, some are too far to hear, some drip in secret leaves, some stand like columns of crystal among columns of trees. You stop in a glade to watch a White Thread Fall or White Silk Fall (for such are their names) when you hear behind you a rush of water, and turning, see through the trees another and yet a further fall. Water is falling everywhere, from the sides, from cliffs entirely hidden in leaves, over ledges, out of rocks, while down the middle dashing plunges the headstrong stream, from the Fierce Rapid to the Triple Whirling Pool to the Purple Clear Pool to the Rapid of White War Horses.

All through this valley you never see the sky. Leaves receive everywhere the steady and varying voices of descending waters and pass them ceaselessly to each other. Night and day and year after year it is

always the same, under the moon or the dawn, even in winter the bare trees tremble in the icy wind the plunging waters make, and the waterfalls unintermittently answer each other dispassionately as they falling tumble. It is never silent and you never see the sky. It is haunted. Somebody might step up behind you, and you'd never know till they touched you.

Emerging from this valley at last, there is a bit of a common, like South Wales, with a few cows grazing, and a couple of cottages, then Yakéyama bridge, which we cross, but instead of keeping to the main road we turn off under the mountain and up a rocky path. It is now getting late, and looks like rain.

Here a high, round hill is quite covered with plumes of tossing *susuki,* proud miscanthus grass, whose swaying grace an old poem compares to the long silk sleeves of lovers beckoning to each other. We cross a rocky river and climb an endless winding path through a deep and lonely mountain forest of chestnuts and beeches. There is a sweating and breathless silence as darkness comes and a few drops of rain begin to fall on the hushed leaves.

At last the light of the inn, which stands alone in a clearing under the moon, a pond before the door and another moon in the pond. And then a black cloud. Because the house is so far from others and even from fields it has its own civilisation, a placid one, a ticking of clocks, a croaking of frogs, a sound of sleeping. It contains a hot spring: a swimming-bath of steaming salt water. A hot bath is the first step towards a balance of mind and body.

Starvation I know, eating I know, but the food at Tsuta Onsen is funny. After our having walked

three *ri,* a brace of tiny goldfish and a doll's salad of moss are the mainstay of supper, together with berries, bits of ferns, odds and ends out of the forest, all underpropped with rice and washed down with tea. Why worry? It is a pity that goldfish, when cooked, turn black with surprise. Moss, however it sits in the stomach, looks pretty in a saucer of red lacquer.

We slept badly, as I insisted on having the window open, and a lot of fierce little black mosquitoes came in, together with the night-long soliloquy of a bull-frog, like a sick cow calling her calf.

THE EIGHTH DAY

THE mosquitoes continued to bite long after daylight.

"Of course," said N., quite unvindictively, "if you open the windows——"

It is strange that *"les japonais adorent les courants d'air,"* and yet are afraid of fresh air in sleeping rooms. If you say this to them, they always deny it. It is, nevertheless, true.

Breakfast is brought by a different maid. According to custom, she kneels to serve us, who eat off the floor. She is a country girl of this marvellous northern type, a flower of perfection. About sixteen, she hardly ever raises her eyes, is very simply dressed, has a subdued voice, her silence is tuneful, her hair not long, she hardly knows how to smile, she turns round and round in her hands a round tray of black lacquer that rests on her thighs.

"Don't stare at her so hard," says N. "You'll make her feel uncomfortable. See, she's blushing. Nobody," he asserts, "has ever told her she is beautiful."

Then I will——

It is time to leave. She says she wants, she confesses that she would like, to go to Tokyo. She never will.

"If we catch the 4:20 we shall get back to Tokyo at midday to-morrow," says N.

He may be quite right.

MOTHER KAMCHATKA:

OR

MR. MAINCHANCE IN SEARCH OF THE TRUTH

A FANTASY

"Rosy is the West."

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON.

CHAPTER I

Relates how Mr. Mainchance and his friend left Japan for Kamchatka

THE most loyal and intelligent Japanese I know (writes Mr. Mainchance) is my warm friend Count Hibachi. He lives in Tokyo, in the Kojimachi ward of that city, within a crow's-fly of the Imperial Palace, the very heart of the Japanese Empire. The Imperial Roofs are visible from his bathroom window, or would be, for of course he has never dreamed of looking at them: the Emperor being the Son of Heaven, it is only logical that He should be looked up to.

My friend has a seat in the House of Peers, and sometimes sits on it. He lives in the foreign style, and his home I must say is a mansion, for I do not exaggerate when I assert that it possesses a chimney. This of course makes it conspicuous in that quarter of the town. If I were to describe all the splendours of his existence I might be tempted into writing a lot about Japan and the Japanese in general, which would be a pity, for then my present subject, Kamchatka, and the Kamchatkans, would be neglected, if not quite crowded out.

One day, when I called on the Count, he happened to ask me if I knew much about Kamchatka?

"Not much," I said, "for I've never thought about it."

"Tell me at any rate your idea of the place."

"Well," I mused, "let me consider. I know it's somewhere in the Far North-East beyond Japan, but I couldn't draw a good map of it. I know that it's a peninsula in Eastern Siberia, and forms a province of that country. I fancy that it is bounded by the sea of Okhotsk, the Arctic Ocean and the Behring Straits. I have heard that there are numerous extinct and active volcanoes, and that earthquakes are frequent. I suppose the fisheries would be important, and that the trade in furs is pretty lucrative. The natives, of course, would be chiefly engaged in hunting and fishing——"

I stopped abruptly, for the Count was looking at me as if I had risen from the dead. I was about to ask what was the matter when he burst into shrieks of laughter. Imagine my alarm. I thought his brain was suddenly deranged, but he quickly recovered his dignity.

"And you call yourself an educated Englishman?" he said.

"I told you I didn't know much about it," I retorted, rather nettled. "After all, I wasn't at Eton and Balliol to learn geography."

"Therefore," he said, "it would come as a surprise to you to know that Kamchatka is not a peninsula at all, but a group of islands."

"You can't pull my leg like that, Count."

"What!"

He hurried out of the room, and presently returned with an atlas. Just think of my astonishment when I found that he was speaking the truth!

"I could have sworn that it was a peninsula," I muttered.

"Wait," he said. "What are you doing this spring? Have you made any plans? If not, then let us visit Kamchatka together."

"My good man! You might as well ask me to go to the North Pole."

"Not at all. Wait till you've been there. I know the country pretty thoroughly, and I can assure you that it is extremely interesting."

Now I like to go off the beaten track, so I thought, why not take a sporting chance? and agreed to go. I was surprised to hear that several lines maintained an excellent service of ships between Yokohama and Ninnyhammer, a port in Kamchatka. I must confess that another circumstance helped to induce me to make this voyage: I was hard up, and I wanted to marry. I was, in fact, engaged to my present wife, then Cremona Phiddle. I hardly imagined that by going to Kamchatka I should make any money, but I did think it would help me to forget the depression of spirits into which I had been plunged by a deficiency of that commodity.

Once we were on board, the Count kindly undertook to tell me something about the country of our destination.

"All the year round," he said, "but especially at this time, the whole country is gay with the national flower——"

"And what is that?"

"The blossoms of the gooseberry bush."

"Ah, I remember! Ignorant as I am, I know that the reputation of Kamchatka rests chiefly on its exquisite gooseberry blossoms."

"That's just it," he murmured sadly, shaking his head, "there are such clouds of them everywhere that foreign visitors seldom see anything else."

"I suppose there are a lot of tourists," I said. "Are there as many as in Japan?"

"Oh, far, far more. Everything is far worse in Kamchatka——"

"Oh, don't say that."

"—except the things that are far better."

"Such as?"

"Well, you can find out for yourself."

"What about books?" I asked. "What has been written about this place?"

"I think everybody has heard of Cadwallo Tern?"

"Oh, rather. By the way, what a curious likeness the name has to that of Lafcadio Hearn."

"It has, certainly," said the Count. "I've noticed it before."

"And I suppose the two men were rather alike?" I suggested, though I had read nothing of either of them.

"They were absolutely different. Hearn was far the better man. He, at all events, did some useful clerical work, collecting facts, fancies, fairy tales and so forth, and arranging them with diligence and skill. But this Tern was a wretched, soft-headed, dreamy fellow, and wrote a considerable quantity of sentimental though pretty stuff which savours too much altogether of wish-fulfillment. Why, he made Kamchatka out to be a sort of paradise. He was very far-sighted, but he could only focus on the remote past. For him present and future seemed hardly to exist. One result of his longsightedness was that all the Kamchatkan cabmen looked in the distance like

Adonises, all the housemaids like a rosebud garden of nymphs and all the gooseberry blossoms like swansdown. He has a far greater reputation in Europe than Lafcadio Hearn, which seems to me extraordinarily unjust. But the public taste is so capricious."

"Absolutely," I said. "And are there no other books?"

"Millions," said the Count.

"And what are they like?"

For answer he shrugged his eyebrows.

"So bad?" I hazarded. "But there must be some good books."

"There are," he admitted, "but I never saw anybody reading them. People don't like good books. They like nice ones."

CHAPTER II

How they came to Kooty, the capital of Kamchatka

THE passage from Japan to Kamchatka takes a really astonishingly short time. To a hardened traveller like myself, the crossing seems to pass like a flash. We hardly realised that we had left Yokohama (we had been so deep in conversation) when the ship came in sight of Ninnyhammer. It was a desolate looking spot. I turned to the Count and found him smiling dryly.

"I remember," he said, "that when I asked you about Kamchatka, you knew at least that it is subject to earthquakes."

He pointed to Ninnyhammer.

"Look," he said, "this port, formerly so flourishing, is now struggling to emerge from its own ruins."

When we landed, I found little to interest me except one street of shops with large plate-glass windows, behind which could be seen displayed the most gorgeous stuffs and brocades, together with antiques and objects of art.

"Those materials," said the Count, "are specially made for American tourists, and they buy them in the belief that they have shown a discriminating appreciation of Kamchatkan civilisation."

"A blissful ignorance."

"That doesn't excuse it."

"But the curios and antiques, they must be genuine?"

"A lot of them are," the Count admitted.

"Then why do the Kamchatkans sell them?"

"Why do people sell anything? Alas, they're poor. The remnants of Kamchatkan culture fill many museums in Massachusetts."

"But tell me why," I asked, "why there are so many officials in Kamchatka?" For wherever I looked, everybody was in uniform. It was impossible to distinguish policemen from porters, or admirals from crossing sweepers: everyone wore a cocked hat, a sword, epaulettes and spurs.

"The local custom, you know," the Count said airily. "Every Kamchatkan subject is regarded as an official and acts accordingly."

"State socialism?"

"You can't say that here! It's fatal! But there's not really much difference between the tyranny of Czarism and that of the Cheka. That's why we're so lucky in Japan to have an infallible constitution."

By this time we were in the train on the way to the capital, the city of Kooty, and it stopped for a moment at a station called Nightingale Valley. Looking out of the window into a vast shambles of telegraph wires and locomotives, I was just in time to see a gentleman of the lower classes being kicked in the face by a policeman.

"Why is he doing that?" I asked.

"Hush," said the Count, "you can't say that. It's fatal. The emperor's train is due to pass here to-morrow, so they are taking precautions."

"Emperor! Do they have one here too, like Japan?"

"They do have one, but it is not at all like Japan. Here he is called the Cham. In Japan the Emperor is, after all, a constitutional monarch, and everything is awfully up-to-date. Here everything is only up to the date of about 2500 years ago. And the Cham of Kamchatka is not merely called the Son of Heaven—a modest title enough, surely—no, he is regarded as the Father of God."

"A very responsible position," I ventured to remark.

"Very," said the Count. "But he has the most superb *savoir-vivre*. Medusa merely turned people to stone by looking at them, but the Cham of Kamchatka has no snakes in his hair—only a pleasant, almost immature face like a board-school teacher—he needn't even look at people for them to feel at once an urge to self-destruction simply from a sense of duty."

"Really!"

"Yes," he went on, "the Kamchatka sense of honour is so highly developed that it almost, but not quite, looks like something else. By the way, I don't know why you keep making comparisons with Japan. Comparisons stink. It is absurd to think of comparing the two countries. There we have every modern convenience, peace and concord, money, industry, good taste, originality, beauty, rice, *bushido,* chastity, elegance, freedom of speech, harakiri, capital, labour, seaweed, Marxism, telegraph wires, art, science and *saké*. But, between ourselves, Kamchatka is still in a state of barbarism. It is a savage country. Don't dream of comparing them again."

"All right," I said. "I probably do it because Japan is the last country I've been in."

"That's no excuse," said the Count severely. "Remember that I am a Japanese. It is a studied insult to mention a Kamchatkan in the same breath. Remember that we Japanese have self-respect. We are descended from the gods. As for these Kamchatkans——"

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"Do itashimashité," he said, with the delightful courtesy of his race, bowing five or six times and giving a polite lick to my boots just as the train drew up in the station of Kooty. It is an enormous building in the plainest and severest Doric style. As we emerged from the portico I couldn't help noticing that everything looked awfully earthquake-proof. This, of course, reminded me of dear old far-away Tokyo, but I didn't dare to suggest it to my friend, who was just saying:

"Look, my dear Mainchance, at this group of buildings. Don't you think it's extraordinary that the Kamchatkans have made such an extraordinarily deep study of Western civilisation that they are now so accomplished as to be able to lay one stone on another? and even to smear a framework of girders with concrete? Formerly they could only build with sticks and straw. Now look! Why, one might almost be in Chicago. I think that here in front of Kooty station North has really met South at last, in spite of the poet."

"It is very interesting," I said.

"You aren't very enthusiastic," remarked a Kamchatkan standing near me.

"It's all so bewildering," I said. "I expected to see—well—gooseberry blossoms."

The Kamchatkan smiled, and bowed eight or nine times.

"They are imitating Japanese customs," the Count whispered hurriedly in my ear, "and you see how absurdly they exaggerate."

"I will guide you," said the Kamchatkan amiably.

"How kind!" I exclaimed.

"Keep your hair on," barked the Count huskily, as he nudged my elbow. He only wants to practise speaking English. Ask him if he's a Christian."

I asked him, and he was.

"Do you know why?" the Count demanded. "Do you know why he goes to Church? To improve his English. They all do."

"But why should they want to?"

"Well, unlike us, they have an insatiable interest in commerce. You see, they have a terrible population problem: it increases by two million babies every year. Infant mortality carries off about half, but the rest, not unnaturally, require a little nourishment."

"Why don't they try birth control?"

"Hush, don't say that. It's fatal. You don't know what your talking about: you don't know the Kamchatkans as I do. I can assure you that, owing to the fact that they have no social life at all, their sole amusement is to propagate the species. After all, too, suicides have to be replaced some time or other."

CHAPTER III

In which they receive two visitors

As we motored through the streets I noticed that the national flag was waving on the front of every house. It is an emblem whose design shows commendable simplicity—a poached egg, gules, displayed on a white plate. That's all. A triumph of heraldic economy, for whose sake anyone might be proud to bleed to death, or to be kicked repeatedly in the face by a policeman.

"But why," I asked, "is there a flag on every house?"

"To-day," said the Kamchatkan, who was still with us, "is a national holiday."

"You have a lot of them, don't you?" said the Count. "How many are there in the year?"

"Three hundred and sixty-five," said the Kamchatkan, "except in leap year."

"Fancy," I said. "And what exactly are you celebrating to-day?"

"This is the seven thousandth anniversary of a famous decree of our first Cham," he replied. "On this very day man first made God in his own image. Our Cham, you know, is called the Father of God. At the beginning of each reign, therefore, God is reappointed Honorary and Hereditary Crown-Prince of Kamchatka."

"It is a great honour for him," I remarked, and at the same moment caught sight of a woman bowing to a soldier.

"Why is she doing that?" I cried.

"It is obvious," said the Count. "If the Cham is the Father of God, then soldiers, the pillars of his state, can be regarded as nothing less than angels."

"Yet we are not in the least militaristic," said the Kamchatkan.

"Really!" I said, but on attempting to engage him in further conversation I found that he was only using the English language to conceal his thoughts —assuming, of course, that he had any thoughts to conceal. So when we arrived at our hotel I thanked and dismissed him. No sooner had this been done than a card was sent up by a professor of the Champerial University, who wished to see us.

"Show him up," said the Count. And added, turning to me, "A Japanese friend of mine, who was born and educated here, tells me that a Kamchatkan never pays a call on anybody, even on one of his own countrymen, unless he has an ulterior motive."

I doubted the truth of this when I saw a suave and smiling man bowing himself into the room so violently that I was about to pity him for being a sufferer from locomotor ataxia. But he was suffering from nothing worse than a desire to please.

"Pray sit down." The Count politely drew out a chair and the professor politely drew in his breath. He had brought with him the most sumptuous presents—a bouquet of orchids, a cabinet of cigars and a valise of chocolates.

"A Japanese proverb," the Count warned me in

a whisper, "says that in Kamchatka they always put the best gooseberries on the top of the basket."

The professor asked for our first impressions of his country, though he was careful to say nothing of his impressions of our countries. Most of our questions he answered with a smile, a bow, or an evasive and deprecatory murmur. But it wasn't long before he drew out from under each arm the causes of his visit—one was an English book, and one a Japanese.

"To-morrow," he explained, with a smile of pride, apology and gratitude, "I have the honour to be engaged by command to lecture before his Champerial Majesty the Cham at the Champerial Palace, so I wished to ask you one or two questions."

"I congratulate you," I said, with one eye on the orchids and cigars, "but grateful as I am for your magnificent present, I should have been only too pleased to answer your questions without any——"

At this the professor looked mighty confused, and the Count gave me a dig in the ribs, so I concluded that I had made a *faux pas*. We both answered his questions as affably as possible and offered him one of his own cigars, so he was able to go away in quite a good temper.

He had no sooner left than another card was brought to us by the manager himself, who lightly touched his feet several times with his forehead before opening his mouth.

"A Champerial Messenger," he whispered, and bowed again.

"Show him up," said the Count.

'Why do they bow so much in Kamchatka?" I asked.

"Christians make the sign of the cross," he said, "but Kamchatkans show the mark of the slave."

"Yes, but don't forget you're rather fond of bowing in Japan," I said. Righteous indignation glowed behind his imperturbably mask-like face.

"The Kamchatkans have shamelessly imitated us," he said. "They caricature us. We Japanese bow from politeness."

He drew himself up.

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"Not at all, not at all!" he exclaimed, and bowed affably several times from politeness and the hips. In so doing, however, he dislodged with his bottom a large and elegant porcelain vase. It dived from its pedestal just as the Champerial Messenger was bowing his way into the room, with the result that the Count and this Kamchatkan dignitary became involved in a perfect orgy of salaams and salutes. The Count wished to combine a welcome with an apology, the Messenger a greeting with an acknowledgement. Head to head, each time each attempted to rise, each found the other about to bow again, and each bowed again. It was exactly like two cocks fighting, at one of the moments when the birds bob their heads up and down together, looking for a stranglehold. After some three minutes had elapsed in this way I tapped my friend on the shoulder.

"Come, come," I said, "you have offered His Excellency neither a cigar, nor an orchid, nor a chocolate." And so the way was prepared for conversation. I admit I felt honoured, but my poor friend was almost overwhelmed when the Champerial Messenger, whose name was Baron Ippikijiji, presented us with a gilt-edged card two feet square, embossed

with the Champerial monogram in gold, and graciously commanding us to present ourselves at the Palace on the following day. But after the Baron had gone the Count turned to me and said:

"Baron! He's not a baron at all. I tell you the whole thing is copied from us Japanese."

"Well, you copied it from us Europeans," I observed. "We have given you every chance to benefit by our wonderful civilisation. Would you grudge the same advantages to the Kamchatkans? In Japan——"

"Please," he said. "Please let us not speak of Japan. My country has really very little connection with Kamchatka."

"Except the purely geographical one."

"Let's go in to lunch," he said.

CHAPTER IV

In which they visit the Palace of the Cham, and are decorated

In the morning, when we had duly equipped ourselves with top-hats and yellow gloves—Count Hibachi is my warm friend, but I must confess him to be a stickler for etiquette—a personage arrived to conduct us to the Palace. I understood him to be one of the private secretaries to the private secretary of the Private Secretary to the Permanent Private Secretary of the Champerial Audience Bureau. He was certainly very polite.

The Palace is surrounded by a series of moats, and as we crossed each of them we were scrutinised and cross-questioned with the utmost politeness by smiling officers of the guard with fixed bayonets and hand-grenades. But it would be tedious to relate the somewhat labyrinthine way in. I will only say that as we passed an open doorway whom should I see but the professor of the day before in the middle of his lecture. There he was, orating with orotundity, proudly delivering his lecture with suitable gestures and significant pauses; but I couldn't quite understand what was happening, for there was no audience to be seen!

"You see," the secretary explained, "it is so difficult for the Cham, in spite of his Divine Rights,

to be in several places at once. To-day, for example, he has a lot of engagements. He has to open the new military academy, launch a battleship, write some letters, beget an heir, and then, of course, also listen to this lecture. So when he can't be present in person, they just stick up his photograph, as you see in this lecture-room, which is known as the Hall of the Ear. And here, you see, next door, is the Hall of the Eye, where a famous scientist is now giving a demonstration in natural science before another photograph of His Champerial Majesty."

And so we passed on into an anteroom, where we were surprised to learn that the Cham had very graciously consented to confer on us a decoration, as we were regarded as distinguished foreign visitors. I thought of my Cremona! How delighted she would be at my receiving such a splendid favour! But imagine my chagrin when I heard that we were only to receive the *tenth* class of the Unimpeachable Order of the Sacred Gooseberry Bush, founded in commemoration of that illustrious and impeccable shrub under which the first Cham had been born—the one who first had the privilege of becoming the father and patron of God the Father. This honour so much affected the Count that he nearly swooned away, while my disappointment was immediately augmented by the news that we were not to receive the coveted tribute from the hands of the Cham himself, but from his deputy, one of the grand chamberlains, a prince of the blood. . .

I doubt if the reader is in the least interested in feudal ceremonies—how we entered the August and Ineffable Hall of Decorations, crawling on our faces,

turning three back somersaults to the left, then three more to the right, stepping back, pointing the toes, and bowing once at each heart-beat—so I won't describe them. It is enough to say that we received our orders, together with a present each of a gold chain, a cage, a sword and a bludgeon, all in miniature; which objects have in Kamchatka some symbolic significance I was unable to ascertain.

As the morning was fresh and breezy I suggested that we should walk back to our hotel, but the Count thought it would be most unbecoming to descend from such heights in anything less than a luxurious motor, so leaving him I returned on foot. As I passed through the public park I noticed that the celebrated gooseberry blossoms were just breaking out all over the trees, and a number of children were playing under them. I thought the flowers looked rather rusty, but I couldn't resist giving to the little ones my cage, sword, chain and bludgeon. The dear little mites liked these toys so much that I gave them also my order, which they hung round the neck of a mangy dog which was rubbing its terribly raw skin on the grass.

When I got back I found the Count standing before the mirror in his new regalia.

"Come and try yours on too," he said. "They're really magnificent."

When I remarked that I had given mine away he refused to believe me, and when I convinced him he thought, and said, that I must be mad.

"Cages, swords, chains and bludgeons don't amuse me, old boy," I said, "and as for the order, since it was only of the tenth class I can only regard

it as a tenth-rate compliment. What do you think? Wouldn't my Cremona be galled to the marrow by marrying a man who had consented to accept it?"

The Count bowed in silence.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Pon appoints himself a guide

THE following day Count Hibachi went out alone, for he had an appointment with the Curator of the Champerial Military Museum, in which is preserved a hair of the tail of the dog that might have bitten the Cham before last. A professor of the Champerial Historical Propaganda Bureau lately had his head cut off for putting this hair under a microscope, where he claimed to have discovered it to be a forgery. It was, he asserted, demonstrably uncanine—a synthetic hair, in fact, of modern design. The nature of the hair was not in itself of importance, but the legend attached to it was. By putting his eye to the microscope the gentleman had exploded a myth. Only it wasn't called that: it was called lese-majesty. The whole staff of the bureau at once resigned, half to apologise for life to the spirits of the August Champerial Ancestors, the other half to slit their bellies.[1]

As I was left alone for the day, I sent a messenger to a person to whom I bore a letter of introduction. This was a Mr. Pin Pon, the highly placed and highly cultured chargé d'affaires of the Cocos

[1] The Kamchatkan operation cannot, of course, be compared with the highly-refined Japanese *hara-kiri*, elegantly and adroitly executed with a beautiful sword. The Kamchatkans use a hatpin and coal-shovel; or, since the introduction of Western civilisation, simply the more homely spoon and fork.

Keeling Islands, and a keen student of things Kamchatkan. My gratification may be imagined when that gentleman promptly came in his purring limousine and undertook to show me that very day some of the sights of Kooty. He was affability itself, and we at once drove off, Mr. Pon begging me to put him as many questions as I wished.

"Then what," I immediately enquired, "what is that wonderfully large and up-to-date-looking factory on our left?"

"That is one of the smaller universities."

"Factory!" exclaimed my accomplished guide.

"What!"

"Yes," he said, "whenever you see a factory here, you may be sure it is a university. Kamchatkan education is designed to prevent people from thinking, so there are thirty-six universities in Kooty alone, and some of them contain as many as fifteen thousand victims."

"Victims?"

"Well, you can hardly call them students—— Look, you see that row of buildings near the canal? That is the Champerial Hotel—the Champerial Theatre—the Champerial Hospital—the Champerial Library—the Champerial Lunatic Asylum—the Champerial Abattoir—the Champerial Refuse Destructor—the Champerial Sewage Farm—and the Champ——"

"Stop!! Why are they all called Champerial?"

"Because they are. Everything in Kamchatka belongs to the Cham. After all, he is the Father of God, so it is only fair that he should have a share in the commercial and municipal enterprises of his own country. Not only is he the Father of God, but he is

also regarded as the father of his people. They call him the Little Father."

"Quite like the Russian Czar, isn't it?"

"Oh, quite. But you can't say so. You can't criticise anything here—it's fatal. Here, too, there will be a revolution——Look, there on the right is the new palace for the Crown Prince."

"Why," I said, "it's a shameless imitation of a palace I've seen in Tokyo."

"Of course," he said, "the Kamchatkans are great admirers of the Japanese and imitate them as much as possible."

Mr. Pon then leant forward and gave some instructions to the chauffeur.

"What excellent Kamchatkan you speak," I said.

"It's very easy to speak the colloquial," he replied, "for the language only has twenty different syllables—which are pronounced through the teeth —but the writing is the most difficult in the world. Chinese and Japanese are child's play compared to it. It was specially made to prevent clear thinking, for the Kamchatkans are terribly afraid of plain speaking, home truths and common frankness. I said that the colloquial is easy, but as a matter of fact there are 753 grades of conversation corresponding to the 753 degrees of precedence in the civil service; though there are only 504 ways of saying 'I beg your pardon,' so a lot of them have to be used twice over."

"Fancy," I said.

"Fact," said Mr. Pon, who, like most Cocos Keeling Islanders, was of a practical turn of mind.

I suddenly noticed that we were driving through a much poorer quarter of the city.

"Are these the slums?" I asked innocently.

"Oh, no," said Mr. Pon, "not particularly. Kooty is a remarkable spot. Like so many Eastern cities, it must be regarded as having no slums because the whole thing is one large slum——Look, this is the Champerial Boulevard."

I put my head out of the window, but could see nothing except a lot of shabby shops dotted with universities. We had now been driving for four hours, and I was tired.

"I suppose we have seen nearly everything now?" I ventured politely.

My companion smiled indulgently.

"Ah, you don't know your Kooty," he said. "We haven't seen a tenth part of it. Don't you see that all the houses are of one story? Don't you see that all the roads, like the sentences of a Kamchatkan conversation, don't lead anywhere? But look, we are approaching the quarter of pleasure—these are the restaurants where the famous singing-girls are to be found.

After passing several thousand restaurants, the car drew up in a park.

"Come," said Mr. Pon, "let's get out and walk for a bit."

"About the singing-girls——?"

"Well, you see," he explained, "in Kamchatka there is no social life. Every man in the country receives the same education, or stultification, until the age of twenty-five; then they all graduate from a university and enter the civil service, the Champerial civil service——"

"Not everybody?"

"Everybody. They are then married off by their parents to girls they have never seen. During the

next twenty years they divide their time between the service of the Cham and procreation. At forty-five, being now a prominent civil servant (both officially and abdominally) and the father of a family, a Kamchatkan wants a little amusement. That's where the singing-girls come in."

"I see," I said. "No doubt they go on singing to him till he can no longer hear."

"Exactly," said Mr. Pon. "They sing him into the crematorium. A jolly old age, isn't it?"

"But why," I asked, "is there no social life?"

"For two reasons," he said. "First, there's no time. Secondly, the women are uneducated, and forbidden to do anything except wipe the babies' noses and——Look, we must turn off here to the left."

We turned off—just in time—and presently found ourselves in a wide and quiet street. It was late in the afternoon, and here there was neither traffic nor dust. I supposed at first we were in some select residential quarter—or were these nice houses colleges belonging to yet another university. Probably the latter, I decided, but when I saw at each door a footman in livery calling out hospitably: "Come in! Come in!" I couldn't help thinking that perhaps I was mistaken. These chaste and dignified mansions must be hotels——

"Do you know where you are?" said Mr. Pon, watching me closely. "These are the licensed quarters."

"What——! Such respectable, such severe façades?"

"I thought you'd be surprised. Let me give you a little lecture. You are probably aware that the

American missionaries in Kamchatka are doing their best to abolish licensed prostitution——"

"Quite right, too."

"They think it's dreadful, because in their own country, a Christian one, they greatly prefer unlicensed prostitution. Just as they prefer unlawful drinking. Dear me, the Statue of Liberty has a lot to answer for. When everything's free everything's dull, therefore one makes a law in order to have the sweet and stolen pleasure of breaking it in secret. Well, well, all men are unmoral——"

"Well, in theory," I mused aloud, "in a civilised community, all sexual relations ought to be on a basis of freedom, so that it would be possible for birds of each feather to flock together. What I mean is, in a properly arranged community prostitution would be as unnecessary as celibacy."

"Idealist!" said Mr. Pon archly. "I am as moral as most people, but I think one must temper the enthusiasm of the abolitionists by observing dryly that people have been known to attack the sins they envy."

"Oh, but you can't approve of prostitution," I protested, "you can't treat is lightly and flippantly."

"I don't particularly approve of it," said Mr. Pon, "but prudes are worse than whores, and *e feminis publicis rei publicae natae sunt.*"

How could I argue with such a latitudinarian? These Cocos Keeling Islanders are just like Frenchmen. . . .

CHAPTER VI

In which some opinions are stated

Mr. Pin Pon was good enough to entertain me at one of the establishments of singing-girls (Cremona, I swear I was thinking only of you), but after I left him I began to feel that I must not take his judgments for gospel. He was hospitable and engaging, travelled and talkative. But surely he was too hard on the Kamchatkans? These delightful singing-girls could surely only be produced by a very high civilisation. When I put the question to Count Hibachi, and attempted to speak for the Kamchatkans, he only said I was too soft.

"Mr. Pon," he said, "is an old resident who knows what he's talking about. After all, the Kamchatkans are not much good: all they can do is to imitate the Japanese. East is East and West is West, and Japan's better than either."

When I suggested that the Japanese had also imitated the West, that America had imitated England, England Rome and Rome Greece, he merely replied:

"We Japanese have a great genius for assimilating foreign customs, but the true Japan never changes."

"Nonsense," I said impatiently. "If people assimilate anything, it's bound to change them."

"You don't understand the true Japan," he said.

"The true Kamchatka is my present study," I answered, and immediately began to apply myself to a careful consideration of some of Mr. Pon's opinions. I spent a number of days making excursions, and instead of consulting the Kamchatkans, who would naturally be biased, I consulted my own common sense. Their alleged militarism, I concluded, was partly, nay mostly, congenital, for the warlike habits of two thousand years don't disappear in a night; but also partly self-defensive. Besides, before the present Cham entered upon the parental guardianship of his subjects, and of the Almighty, he had made a tour of Europe. There they showed him nothing but guns, tanks, aeroplanes, submarines, poison gas, liquid fire and death rays; and simply as a matter of politeness, he had to make large purchases of these novelties, so it would be absurd to call the Kamchatkans peculiarly militaristic. By nature they are the most peace-loving people, and in old times were never known to shed blood except when they did: except, for instance, when committing suicide out of sheer loyalty to the Cham; and except for occasional tribal wars and petty feuds, which seldom lasted more than a century, and in which it was only very rarely that more than two hundred thousand lives were lost.

Then there was this little matter of education. Here Mr. Pon was inaccurate. On paying personal visits to the largest as well as to the most private universities, I found the professors often cultivated and amiable, excellent locally-grown coffee was served in large three-handled cups, and among the students was an extraordinary enthusiasm for learning. They had all heard of Benito Lincoln, Abraham Marx, Karl Gladstone, William Ewart Mussolini, H. G.

Wellworthy, John Galls, Stanloyd Baldgeorge, Standard Bennett and G. Bernard Cock-Shaw. Some even asked my opinion of the future state of proletarian literature in England.

"The present era in Kamchatka," they explained, "is just like your Renaissance in Europe—we're all agog."

They were, certainly, most agog. I found, on enquiry, that at least 102.25 per cent of the population are educated for twenty-five years, all passing through kindergarten, preparatory, primary, secondary, tertiary, lower, middle, upper, intermediate and preliminary schools before entering the university. 102.25 per cent—just think of it! On comparing this figure with the statistics of all other countries it will be found appreciably higher than any of them. Japan, I believe, comes next, with something over 99 per cent. Such, in Kamchatka, is the enthusiasm for education that I find there even the uneducated have been educated. I understand that this national result is chiefly obtained by holding national examinations on every national holiday.

Finally, there is the status of the Cham to be considered. Among the Kamchatkans this subject is taboo. It's fatal. I think, then, that I'll also pass it by on the other side. There is really no need even to give an opinion about it. Every right-minded man gives respect where respect is due.

On the whole, then, my opinion of the Kamchatkans is far more favorable than that of the two other sorts of foreigner typified by my friends, Mr. Pin Pon and Count Hibachi—good fellows both of them, but a little too inclined to look at things from their own standpoint. Worldly Mr. Pon tolerates

with an easy and kindly derision the customs of all countries, including his own Colos Keeling Islands; serious Count Hibachi resents imitation but not flattery, and thinks that there's no place like home: in which he's quite right, for Japan is absolutely unique—in spite of shameless emulation on the part of the Kamchatkans.

By the time I had mused thus far and had had time to see and admire something of the delightful home life of the country; of the winsome modesty and coy shyness of the women, even when emancipated; of the clouds of gooseberry blossoms which continued to obscure every landscape with their national fragrance; of the efficiency of the Champerial police; of that charmingly gay disregard of life which causes girls to put an end to themselves when, for instance, they have happened to be born in the Year of the Ass, and are then precluded from marriage by a popular belief that the date of their birth will cause them to henpeck or browbeat their husbands—by the time, I say, that I had learnt to admire all this, I was again called on by Mr. Pon.

I received him amiably, having determined in future to take all his statements *cum grano*.

"Mr. Pon," said the Count, picking up two books from the table, "have you read these? Two of the latest, I believe."

"What!" said Mr. Pon, "what are these? *The New Kamchatka and With Catechism and Camera through Kamchatka to the Cham*. But, my dear Count the most utter piffle! The first is by a man who was here twenty years and is as blind as a bat, the other is by a woman who was here two weeks with a bee in her bonnet. A preposterous old humbug and a giddy

proselytising globe-trotter: one was here too long, and the other not long enough. Appalling trash like this does no end of harm to the country—one book is full of stupid jeremiads, prejudice, carping and ignorant criticism, and statistics about drains: the other is wreathed with smiles and roses, and affected simpers at the quaintness of a life that doesn't exist."

"By the way, my dear Pon," I said, almost overcome by this flood of denunciation, "is there any book about Kamchatka of which you approve?"

He was so long finding an answer that I didn't wait for one.

"It has been my experience," I said, "all over the world, that people always think all the books written about their local habitat are silly or pernicious. To impossible people everything is impossible. Conversely, to the possible all things are possible. I have read several interesting books about Kamchatka and these are two of them."

"Ah, but then," replied Mr. Pon, "of course you don't yet understand the true Kamchatka."

CHAPTER VII

Is concerned with Dangerous Thoughts

"BUT," said Mr. Pon, "I hope you'll allow me to say why I've come."

We both bowed, especially the Count.

"A unique opportunity occurs," he went on, "for you both to get an insight into the politics of the true Kamchatka."

The Count bowed.

"No more singing-girls," said Mr. Pon, with a quite unjustifiable wink. "We are to take the train this afternoon to Kakikukeko and attend a meeting of the new social-democratic party. Baron Ippikijiji will go with us."

"How delightful!" I exclaimed, and we were soon on our way to the station.

In the train I got deep into conversation with the Baron, for Pon and the count were playing *ikijibiki,* or Kamchatkan chess, a game that makes not only conversation, but thought, impossible. It's quite like bridge—by thinking of a lot of red and black spots you close your mind to the hard work of imagination, and then excuse yourself by saying that you have been amused. Everyone to his own lack of taste!

"A noble game," remarked the Baron, "but

I fear you are too hard on us altogether, my dear Mr. Mainchance. Don't judge us so harshly: we are human like yourself. Foreigners say we talk through our teeth, but we often catch them talking through their hats. You will notice here that we do many things in a way directly opposite to yours. But please to remember that when we go to your country we find the same as you do here—everything the wrong way round. And yet is it the wrong way? Cannot both ways be right?"

"Why not indeed?" I said.

"You, for instance, mount a horse on the left, we on the right. Our books begin where yours end. You write across a page, we from top to bottom; you with a pen, we with a brush. A Kamchatkan woman carries a baby on her back; your women carry babies in their arms. When you write the date you put the day, the month, the year; we the year first, then the month, then the day. We write an address in this order—country, town, street, number, name; your way is *vice versa*. Our keys turn in the opposite way to yours; our carpenters saw and plane towards, instead of away from, themselves. In writing a bill, we put the figures first, the corresponding items last —how awfully logical we are! It is amazing to see one of your women threading a needle, for ours always needle their thread—and sew admirably. I could go on for ever. . . . But there's one more thing. Foreigners blame us Kamchatkans because we don't mind going naked: they say it is shameful. How extraordinary! Why do you object? Everybody knows, without looking, how a man or woman is made. We expose our bodies, and maintain a noble reticence of the mind, a lofty spiritual reserve.

You, on the other hand, hide your bodies for no reason at all, and expose shamelessly your private emotions and thoughts to the rude gaze of others. Declarations of feeling, what you call "frankness" or "straightforwardness"—how savage! how obscene! Take literature, for instance. Ours is far greater than yours, for it is confined to elegant, natural objects—the moon, the pleasures of flowers and drunkenness, the shortness of life, the whimsical ruby eyes of albino rats. Nearly all other subjects are taboo. What you call "psychology" we can't admit at all—it's far too unrefined. In this matter, I must confess, I'm sure we're right and you're wrong."

"But if you say that," I complained, "you upset your whole argument. Don't you see your own point —that we may both be right?"

"In this matter," he said, "my mind is made up. I'm adamant."

"Alas, no, Baron," I said sadly, "you're Kamchatkan."

"So," he said, bowing.

"It seems that your logic," I went on, "is also the opposite of ours, for having advanced a proposition, we try, curiously enough, to support it."

"But," said he, "this is different. This is a matter of principle."

"With us," he replied, " it is a matter of principle to be refined, and for every citizen to lay down his life, together with the lives of his kith and kin, ancestors, dependents and descendants, in the service of His Champerial Effulgence the Cham."

"So I observe, sir. But is it reasonable?"

"Sir," he replied, "we don't use that word here.

It's fatal. I am a Kamchatkan. Ours not to reason why."

"I think that's a pity."

"Poor foreign gentleman," he said, shedding tears of compassion, "I see you don't yet understand the true Kamchatka."

"Baron," I murmured, "there seem to be so many true Kamchatkas. Mine, for instance, used to be a peninsula."

"I beg your pardon?" he said aloud; and afterwards I heard him muttering, "Dangerous thoughts! Dangerous thoughts!!"

The train now drew up at Kakikukeko. We at once drove to the meeting and were shown into the best seats by the assistant-sub-vice-deputy-local-commissary of police, who then retreated, bowing at every heart-beat. As he walked away in the distance we noticed that at each martial stride a pair of white cotton gloves tied to the hanger of his sword swung round and smacked his bottom.

"Allow me to point out," said Mr. Pon, "that the number of police in the hall slightly exceeds the audience."

It was indeed the case. The events of the next few minutes passed so rapidly that it is difficult to record them abruptly enough. The speaker, Mr. Vokkusu Poppuri, leader of the new social-democrats, a meek-looking old worthy, appeared on the platform in a respectful silence during which we heard a toothpick drop. Three press photographers from Kooty raised their cameras: this was a signal for the police, who darted out everywhere, mobbed them, broke their cameras, kicked them in the face, and by means of *bulli-boobi* (the Kamchatkan equivalent of

the Japanese *ju-jutsu*) deftly dislocated their arms and legs; as if the pressmen had been no more than chickens.

"Order," said somebody, and was at once arrested.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Poppuri with a bow, and looking round over his spectacles, "we have met here to-night——"

All the policemen in the building at once blew their whistles and swarmed on to the platform. Mr. Poppuri vanished. A man in the audience, so excited that his voice actually rose to a whisper, breathed rashly:

"I thought this would happen."

Obviously a dangerous communist, he was at once arrested and strangled. The rest of the audience were removed to the local gaol, pending trial until they could be quietly put out of the way.

We heard afterwards that when Mr. Poppuri returned to Kooty he was manhandled and nearly lynched by reactionary roughs who were encouraged by a strong cordon of police. The social-democratic party was permanently dissolved, and news of the whole affair was entirely suppressed for a month, after which it was announced that a frightful Red plot against the Cham had been efficiently destroyed by the police, who, throughout the country, were promoted to a higher social grade. A law was then enacted that anybody caught thinking dangerous thoughts would have to slit his belly or it would be done for him. The Prime Minister and the whole Cabinet threw themselves out of office and off the top of the Parliament buildings as a slight token of apologetic loyalty to the Cham.

Our little party had, after the fatal meeting, returned to Kooty by car. We had the pleasure of being entertained at dinner by Baron Ippikijiji. He gave us quantities of champagne and provided singing-girls. Nobody can say that the Kamchatkans are inhospitable to foreign visitors. Afterwards he gave us each a priceless piece of tapestry, and a discourse on the splendidly progressive and liberal institutions of his country, under its ineffably divine Cham. We all went to bed in the best of humours.

NOTE TO CHAPTER VII.—What struck me about the police was that they were such good family men—nearly every one had a baby strapped on to his back; but this didn't in any way interfere with the execution of their duty.

CHAPTER VIII

Relates the conclusion of the visit

Count Hibachi and I now felt that it was time for our visit to come to an end. By now, too, I had really gained some knowledge of the true Kamchatka, that elusive archipelago. So we said good-bye to all our friends and, loaded with souvenirs and pleasant memories, prepared to embark. My joy at the prospect of seeing again Cremona, my betrothed, was mixed with some shrinking back, some touch of diffidence, for I was as needy as ever. To have understood the true Kamchatka was interesting, but quite unprofitable.

The ship was now rapidly withdrawing from those islands which I felt instinctively I should some day see once more. Near the end of the promontory that guards the harbour of Ninnyhammer there is a little cluster of buildings—a cosy and unpretentious drill hall; the roomy but simple quarters of the Bureau of Harbour Statistics where some ten or twenty thousand petty officials (all university graduates) are employed; and a charmingly informal gallows. That is all. Could anything be plainer? But at the extreme end of the headland, at the ocean gate of the Champire, as it were, there stands the world-famous figure with its challenge of welcome, its loud but silent warning to the liberal—I mean, of course, the

Statue of Discipline. One thing is too often described for me to describe it, but I really must record my impressions at that moment. The statue, as is well known, is in the shape of a colossal policeman. He is clad in the regulation uniform, and the orthodox sword hangs at his orthodox hip. One hand, upraised high above the head, grasps firmly a fountain pen, of standard type; in the other there is a conventional scroll of solid iron—it is a facsimile of a certificate of graduation in the University of Taboo. The inflated chest, bulging calves and swollen head appear to be almost bursting with loyalty. The neatly clipped moustache is an eloquent Ode to Duty.

It is inevitable that one should compare the entrance to Ninnyhammer with that to New York—which is just what the Kamchatkans intended by erecting the statue. Is this better, I asked myself, than the Statue of Liberty? What frightful alternatives. I shrink from extremes! I hate moderation! I cannot escape—and wouldn't if I could. Suppress individuality, and you have no life; permit it, and you have no peace. Is it then better to die hypnotised, or to die fighting?

"Well, well," said the Count, coming up and playfully patting me on the back, "I'm glad we're on the way once more to our respective homes. In Tokyo my wife awaits me; in England, no doubt, Miss Cremona Phiddle will be expecting you."

At the name of Cremona my heart dropped a stitch. Before I could recover it, a steward appeared at my elbow. He offered me a basin and a salver. On the latter lay a radiogram:

cham needs confidential foreign adviser peerage thrown in princely salary pension what about it ippikijiji.

I looked up at the horizon, where the raised fountain pen on the Statue of Discipline, last visible sign of Kamchatka, was gleaming like a lonely lighthouse. And then I looked back at the radiogram, I thought of the salary, I thought of Cremona, I thought of myself; and I understood, as if by inspiration, that one could understand the true Kamchatka without saying so; that everybody knows the truth, but nobody speaks it. It isn't done. It's fatal. People who speak the truth don't get looked after.

CHAPTER IX

Epilogue at Kooty

CREMONA and I have been here seven years, and among our best friends are dear Baron Ippikijiji and Mr. Pin Pon (we often join them in a rubber of *ikijibiki*) ; but we also pop over often to Japan, taking the children with us, to stay with Count Hibachi, who is as warm-hearted as ever. I have been twice decorated for my services to the Cham, and I own three motor cars and a peerage. I am now called Count Mainchance. I have long since understood the true Kamchatka, but would never dream of saying so. I always *say* that I am quite certain now that discipline is better than liberty, and that only the young and foolish could have any doubts on the matter. But is that what I really *think?* Ah, thoughts, thoughts! All thoughts are dangerous. Long live Kamchatka, the true and everlasting Kamchatka!

THE END

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